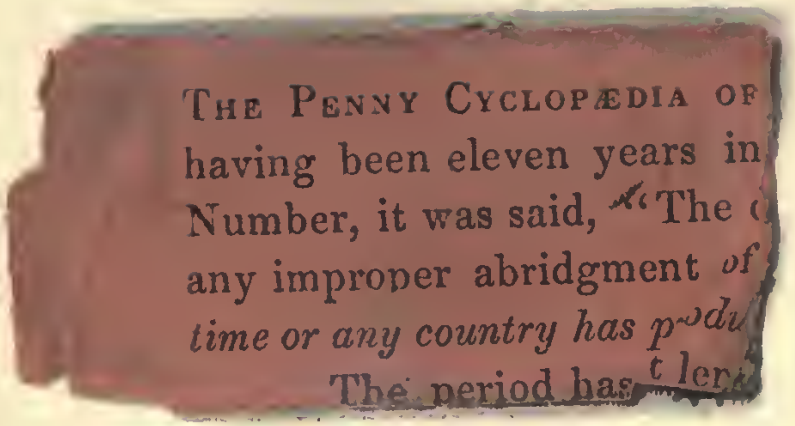
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Ann Williamson

19 July. 5

THE CHRISTIAN TAUGHT BY THE Church's Services.

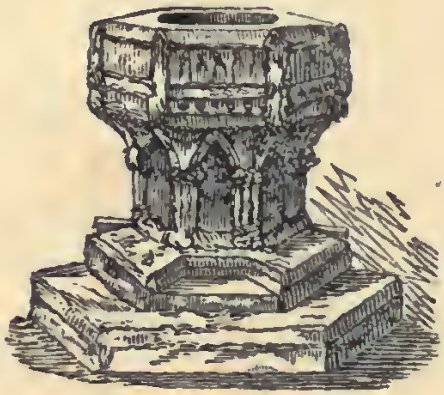
EDITED BY WALTER FARQUHAR HOOK, D.D.,
VICAR OF LEEDS.

"Such as are planted in the house of the LORD shall flourish in the courts of the house of our GOD."—(Psalm xcii. 12.)

"They will go from strength to strength, and unto the GOD of gods appeareth every one of them in Sion."—(Psalm lxxxiv. 7.)

VOL. I.

Advent to Trinity.



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PREFACE.

THE object of this little work is best explained by its title. It was originally begun for the upper classes of a Sunday school, in order to prepare the children for the instruction which they were about to receive in church; and it seemed to be so well calculated for general use, that the Editor requested permission to publish it in the *Devotional Library*.

Much had, indeed, been already written on the Sunday services, in the way of remarks and explanations; still, the writer felt a book was wanted which would make Christians feel the full value of the instruction which the Church has provided for them — which would teach them that her weekly services are not selected at random, but so arranged and connected that each individual may find in them a course of scriptural instruction suited to guide him gradually onward in the Christian life. It has therefore been the object of the writer

of these pages so to set forth the teaching of the Church in each successive service, that every member of the Church may find in it a sermon addressed to himself.

In doing this, the writings of the most eminent Divines of our Church have of course been consulted, and their doctrine strictly adhered to.

It now only remains for the Editor to suggest that every part of the service for the day should be always carefully studied by teachers and young persons previously to using the following chapters; and to add, that if they are the means of bringing any fellow member into church with a mind more prepared to profit by the instruction provided for him there, the object in writing them will have been fully answered.

W. F. Hook.

Leeds, 1st Decr., 1848.

THE CHRISTIAN TAUGHT,

&c.

Advent Sunday.

Epistle, Rom. xiii. 8.
Gospel, St. Matt. xxi. 1.

Morning Lesson, Isa. i.
Evening Lesson, Isa. ii.

We were baptized into Christ's Church that we might be made inheritors of the kingdom of heaven; God mercifully placed us in the ark of His Church that in it we might be trained and prepared for the kingdom of God. It is, therefore, the object of the Church to set before us in order, out of Holy Scripture, the great truths which concern our salvation; and it is this office which she fulfils in the course of her yearly services.

From Advent to Trinity she sets before us the great work of our redemption through our Blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. This period, which is called the doctrinal part of the

year, is devoted to commemorate, by fast and festival, the several passages of His most holy life. Each of these His glorious actions, which we thus remember, is made to teach us some lesson or duty which may be carried out by each one of us in our daily lives. Particular portions of Scripture are selected to help our meditations at these seasons, and proper prayers are chosen to assist our devotions. Thus by little and little is every part of Holy Scripture brought before us for our learning, and Christ's members are taught to be holy, even as He Which hath called them is holy.

The present season of Advent, with which the Church opens her year, proclaims the approach of our Lord Jesus Christ. The very name, (which signifies coming,) speaks to us of the two comings of our Blessed Saviour,—the first, in mercy to save, the second, in terror to judge. By thus having the two Advents of our Lord placed before us at the same time, we are both warned and encouraged; while with awe and trembling we look forward to the awful day of our Lord's coming to judgment, we are taught, that if we learn to love and obey Him as our Saviour, we shall be prepared to meet Him as our Judge.

Tho terrors of the Lord are brought before us this day in many ways. The epistle rouses us from our sleep of sin and sloth, telling us that "the day of the Lord is at hand;"* that "our salvation is nearer than when we believed;"† that is, we are every hour making a nearer approach to that final day, to prepare us for which is the peculiar office of this season.

* Verses 11, 12; † verse 11.

Each evening finds us one day nearer to it than the preceding one left us,—each Advent brings us one year closer to the coming of our Lord.

In the gospel for this day, the awful moment is brought before us by type and figure,—in the lessons by more direct prophecy. Christ's solemn entry into Jerusalem leads our minds onwards to the awful day when He shall come again to visit His Church. He then came "in great humility"* "riding upon an ass, and upon a colt, the foal of an ass;"† but at the last day He shall come again "in His glorious majesty" "riding upon the wings of the wind." (Psa. xviii. 10.) Then he "came suddenly" (Mal. iii. 1) to His temple, to cast out from thence the profaners of the holy place.‡ At the last day He will come at a time when we look not for Him, and at an hour when we are not aware, to cast out from his Heavenly kingdom, all things that offend, and all that work iniquity. (St. Matt. xiii. 41.) Still more clearly does the prophet Isaiah speak to us of Christ's second Advent. He, of all the other prophets, is the one whom God chose to teach His people Israel, of the coming and kingdom of the Messiah. His writings may, therefore, be considered as addressed to Christians no less than to Jews, and are appointed to be read at this season, to prepare the Christian Church for the coming of her Lord. The lesson this morning opens with a loud call to repentance. The heavens and the earth are aroused‖ to listen and give ear while the Lord pleads with His people, setting before them their sins and His mercies. To awaken

* Collect. † Gospel, verse 5; ‡ verse 12.
‖ Morning Lesson, verse 2.

us still more effectually, the evening lesson brings before us as in a picture the terrible day of the Lord of hosts, when men shall "hide themselves in the holes of the rocks, and in the caves of the earth, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of His majesty."*

But if one part of this day's services would thus lead us to cry out with fear, "Who may abide the day of the Lord, and who may stand when He appeareth?"—the other reminds us that Christ has "come into the world to save sinners." If Isaiah speaks to us of the kingdom of glory, he speaks to us also of the kingdom of grace, which is to prepare us for it. To establish this kingdom of grace and to draw men into it, it was that "our Lord Jesus Christ came at this time to visit us in great humility."† In His Blood it is that we are washed and made clean, and in His house that we are taught His ways and made to follow His paths.‡

Let us, then, "arise and walk in the light of the Lord."‖ To enter into the full force of this expression, we must turn to the collect and epistle for the day. The latter teaches us how Christians who would be prepared to meet their God, must now "cast off the works of darkness, and put on the armour of light;" and the former prays for grace to do so. The word "darkness" is used in Scripture to represent that state of ignorance and wickedness which prevailed in the world before the coming of Christ, (Isa. ix. 2; Eph. v. 8,) and in which man still is by nature; therefore by "works of darkness," we are to understand those works of

* Even. Less. verses 19–22. † Morn. Less. verse 16; and Collect. ‡ Even Less. verse 3; ‖ verse 5.

the devil, the world, and the flesh, which all baptized Christians have promised to renounce. But, as "darkness" is a fit emblem of our former state as children of wrath, so light is used to represent that state of salvation made known to the world by the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, and applied to us individually at our baptism; therefore by the expression "armour of light," is signified that holiness, or sanctification, which, being the mark of all who have been called into that blessed state, is as necessary to them as soldiers of Christ, as common armour is to the soldiers of an earthly king. This holiness or sanctification is therefore described by St. Paul as composed of various duties, virtues, and graces, each of which are severally made to answer to the different parts of a warrior's armour, (see Eph. vi. 13, &c.) As the soldier's loins are girt about with armour, so must our minds be built up and defended by the truths of the gospel; we must put on righteousness as he does a breast-plate; faith as he does a shield; and as he uses a sword to repel the attacks of the enemy, so must we oppose the temptations of the devil by the Word of God. This, then, is the armour in which we must be clothed, if we would stand in the great and terrible day of the Lord. With our loins girt about and our lamps burning, we must spend "the time of this mortal life"* "in ceasing to do evil, and learning to do well;"† daily casting off the works of sin and wickedness which Christ came to destroy, and covering ourselves more and more closely with that garment of light and holiness with which

* Collect. † Morn. Less. verses 16, 17.

He came to clothe us. Then in the day when, "in His glorious Majesty" "He shall arise and shake terribly the earth,"* we shall find in Him a place to hide us in, and with Him we may hope to "rise to the life immortal." Having first "washed us and made us clean"† through His most precious Blood, He Who will come to be our Judge, shall prove Himself to be our Saviour also.

* Even. Less. verses 19, 21. † Morn. Less. verse 16.

Second Sunday in Advent.

Epistle, Rom. xv. 4. *Morning Lesson*, Isa. iv.
Gospel, St. Luke, xxi. 25. *Evening Lesson*, Isa. xxiv.

THE services of this solemn season, having told us of Christ's first coming, and warned us of His second approach, now lead us directly to the means by which we are to prepare for it. They tell us how He Who once came to dwell visibly amongst His people, now dwells invisibly though no less surely among them by His holy Word and sacraments; that by His "still small voice" speaking to us in them, He might prepare us for the day when the sound of His terrible voice, calling us to judgment, shall shake "not the earth only, but also heaven." (Heb. xii. 26.) To-day, therefore, we have the warnings and promises of Holy Scripture plainly set before us, accompanied with directions for their use, and prayers for their right application. Let us then "see that we refuse not Him that speaketh," (Heb. xii. 25,) but now "while the day of salvation lasteth," so read and profit by His holy Word, that at the awful day of His second appearing, we may be found "wise unto salvation," through Jesus Christ.

To make the study of God's Word profitable,

it must be accompanied by devout and earnest meditation. The collect teaches us the necessity of this duty, and shews us the steps by which to arrive at its performance. First, by "marking" what we "hear" or "read:" with our minds disengaged from every other thought, we must observe every circumstance which the Spirit of God has recorded for our profit, turning it over in our minds, and seeking how best to apply it to our own case. By this means we shall not fail to "learn,"* our duty,—but even then we must not be satisfied until this knowledge of our duty has been carried out into decided resolutions and active obedience; for these, like the health and strength of our natural bodies, are the only proofs by which we know that the food has been "inwardly digested"* in our souls.

Diligent and devout study of the Bible, such as this, will produce in us that patience and blessed "hope"† which the epistle describes; for he who reads the Holy Scriptures, not as a mere history, but remembering that "whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning," will see in all God's dealings something which may be taken home to himself, and so be to him like God's voice, teaching him and telling him what he ought to do. In the deliverance of God's saints, he will find encouragement and comfort, and the warnings and judgments of the Almighty will cause him to watch and fear. The prophecies of the Old Testament he will look upon not as empty words and figures suited only to the Jewish people, but he will see in them the promise of

* Collect. † Epistle, verse 4.

a Saviour, Who was to "confirm to the Gentiles all the promises made unto the fathers,"* and for Whose coming we at this time rejoice and glorify God.

The portions of Scripture provided for this day will, if applied according to this rule, be found most suitable to the season for which they are appointed. When, in the prophecies of Isaiah, we read the threats of destruction denounced against impenitent nations, we must remember that they are also typical and prophetic of the judgment which will one day come upon the whole world; and that the sins mentioned as having caused their fall are, therefore, those against which we must especially watch and guard.† When we read the warnings spoken to the house of Israel, under the figure of the unprofitable vineyard,‡ and then see how awfully they were brought to pass in the destruction of Jerusalem, prophetically described by our Lord Himself in the gospel for the day,‖ we must remember that what was spoken to the Jewish Church is also addressed to the Christian; and what has been fulfilled once in the destruction of Jerusalem, is but a shadow of the destruction in store for impenitent sinners at the last day. The Church of Christ is now the vineyard of the Almighty; He has "fenced"§ it outwardly with discipline and rules and ordinances, and inwardly with sacraments and Holy Scripture, and with other means of grace. Surely then as He visited the Jewish vineyard for its unprofitableness, so will

* Epistle, verses 8, 9, 10. † Morn. Less. verse 20, &c. and Even. Less. ‡ Morn. Less. ‖ Gospel, verse 24. § Morn. Less. verse 2, &c.

He also visit us, if these great privileges do not bring forth in us the fruits of holiness and true devotion. In the day when the Lord of the vineyard (see St. Luke, xx. 15,) "shall come with power and great glory to render to every man according to the fruit of his doings," He will expect all the branches to bring forth some signs of fruitfulness, some more, some less, according to their different positions and advantages; for as in a vine there is no shoot so small but that it may show some signs of life, so there is no Christian, who may not in some way prove himself a living member of the "true vine," to which he has been joined, (St. John, xv.) Those who shall be found to "abide in Him," (verse 5,) will have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming. As Holy Scripture this day tells us, they will "look up and lift up their heads;"* they will "lift up their voice and sing aloud for the Majesty of the Lord,"†—while the unprofitable branches which have been cut off, shall be fit for nothing but to be cast into the fire and burned, (verse 6.) Seeing then how plainly God's Word sets these things before us for our profit, let us not by careless reading or inattention, incur the guilt of "casting away the law of the Lord of hosts,"‡ but let us employ this holy season in earnestly meditating upon them, with humble prayer to Almighty God, that the words which He thus vouchsafes to speak to us, may bring forth in us the "fruit of good living," and thus strengthen in us the blessed hope of everlasting life.‖

* Gospel, verse 28. † Even. Less. verse 14.
‡ Morn. Less. verse 28. ‖ Collect.

Third Sunday in Advent.

Epistle, 1 Cor. iv. 1.
Gospel, St. Matt. xi. 2.
Morning Lesson, Isa. xxv.
Evening Lesson, Isa. xxvi.

ALMIGHTY God speaks to us through His holy Church and ministers, as well as in His Holy Word. He brings us now into His Church militant, that in it He may train and prepare us for His coming in the Church triumphant. This is what the services for this third Sunday in Advent would teach us. They point out to us the office of the Church, and of those who rule in it; they teach us our duties and privileges in it;* and shew us how the blessings of Christ's kingdom of grace are to prepare us for the far higher blessings of His kingdom of glory.†

The office and power of Christ's ministers is exactly explained to us by the word "steward," which is applied to them both in the collect and gospel for the day. A steward is one who in the absence of his master has received power to rule his house and to dispense his goods. His own circumstances may perhaps be no better or higher than those of many of his fellow-servants, (see Ember Days,) but the

* Collect and Epistle. † Proper Lessons.

commission he has received entitles him to respect, for his master's sake, and any want of respect shewn to him would surely be a want of respect shewn to the master who sent him. Christ's ministers are the stewards whom He has set over "His household," (St. Matt. xxiv. 45,) the Church, now that He has withdrawn His visible presence. As the successors of those whom Christ sent in His Father's name, (St. John, xx. 21,) they have power to admit men into His household, and to dispense to them the outward signs through which the riches of His grace are conveyed. To them, also, (as we are specially taught at this time,) is committed the care of preparing their fellow-servants for the day when their "Lord shall come and reckon with them." We see, then, how in obeying the messenger we are also obeying the Master; how in submitting ourselves to those who minister to us in His absence, we are preparing for the time when He shall manifest His own glorious presence.

The office of Christ's ministers now, like that of John the Baptist before our Lord's first advent, is to "make ready a people prepared for the Lord." To his life, therefore, the gospel for this day refers us.* We here read how he sent his disciples to Christ for the confirmation of his doctrine and the strengthening of their own faith. So it is with the ministers of Christ now. The end and object of their teaching is only to lead us to our Blessed Lord, and to join us more closely to Him. They preach to us out of those Scriptures which shew that He is "the Christ." They call us to repentance,

* Gospel, verse 2, &c.

that we may be brought to our Saviour and receive remission of sins in His Name. They lead us to Him in prayer; they teach us to do His will that we may know more of His doctrine, and so walk more closely with Him; and they administer to us those holy Sacraments by which He chooses to "dwell in us, and we in Him."

To those who are so brought to Him, our Lord will disclose Himself more and more. He will open their eyes and ears to understand the wondrous things of His law;* He will cleanse them from the leprosy of sin, and raise them from the death of sin unto the life of righteousness.†

The epistle teaches us how we are to treat those through whom we receive such high and holy privileges. Looking upon them as the ambassadors of Christ, we are to esteem them very highly for their work's sake. (1 Thes. v. 13.) Instead of setting ourselves up as judges of their conduct,‡ we are told to think of the day when both ministers and people shall stand before the judgment seat of Christ,—the former to give an account of their stewardship, the latter of the talents committed to their charge. As no fault in our ministers can now make void their commission, so no fault of theirs will in that day excuse us for having wasted the gifts it conveyed.

In accordance with the rest of this day's services, the morning lesson contains a hymn addressed by the Church and her members to their Redeemer. Christ's people are represented as dwelling in a secure mountain,‖ supported and

* Gospel, verse 4; † verse 5. ‡ Epistle, verse 5.
‖ Morn. Less. verses 6, 7.

nourished by the good things He has provided for them,* and waiting for the more complete manifestation of His presence.† To all such as are thus living with Him in His kingdom of grace, He is said to be a light and defence, so that to them death itself shall not be a terror, nor our Saviour's coming in glory an object of fear.‡ But lest we should be inclined to rest on our privileges, or think ourselves too secure, because through God's mercy we have been admitted into His holy mountain, the evening lesson teaches us that our heart and spirit must go along with our outward profession. We must not be content with having been baptized into Christ's visible Church, or barely believing that "He will come to be our Judge," but we must be looking out for Him; with our spirit within us we must "seek Him early,"‖ must "wait for Him in the way of His judgments," and the desire of our souls must be unto His Name. If at any time we have been tempted astray out of "His strong city,"§ His sure refuge, we must not rest satisfied until we have discovered what "other Lords,"¶ *i. e.* what bad passions or strong temptations have had dominion over us, and in the words of this chapter we must return to Him and pour out our prayer of penitence before Him. It is to those of His members who are waiting for Him in His holy mountain, that our Lord addresses the gracious promises contained in the last verses of this lesson; where he assures them that their dead bodies shall be raised to life through their union with His Body, and that "when He

* Morn. Less. verse 6; † verses 8, 9. ‡ Evening Lesson; ‖ verse 8; § verses 1, 2; ¶ verse 13.

shall come out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity, they shall be hid and protected until the shadow of His indignation be overpassed."*

This day, on which we are taught the merciful provision and protection afforded us in Christ's Church, is also very appropriately chosen as the time to offer up prayers for its welfare. During the ensuing Ember Week all the members of Christ are commanded to implore God's blessing on the ministers of Christ, and the people committed to their charge. For the former, we pray that they may rightly dispense God's manifold gifts of grace; for the latter, that they may not only receive them but have grace to use them to His honour and glory; that so all the inhabitants of God's holy mountain, dwelling together in unity of spirit, and in the bond of peace, may be found a a people acceptable in His sight — prepared to meet their God.

* Even. Less. verses 19-21.

Fourth Sunday in Advent.

Epistle, Phil. iv. 4.
Gospel, St. John, i. 19.

Morning Lesson, Isa. xxx.
Evening Lesson, Isa. xxxii.

We have now to close the Advent service, and prepare for the holy festival of our Blessed Lord's Nativity. On this day then, the three Advents of our Lord are distinctly brought before us. We welcome His first coming as our Saviour,*—we look out for His second coming as our Judge,†—and we pray that by His inward spiritual coming amongst us now, He may prepare our souls to meet Him.‡

How entirely we depend upon this His invisible Advent and Presence with us, it is the object of this day's services to teach us. The great God of heaven and earth did indeed come down as at this time from heaven to procure for us a crown of glory at His second appearing, but He will give it only to those who so run that they may obtain it; therefore does the collect liken us to men who run a race to obtain an earthly crown. We know how diligently they would put away everything that might hinder their progress, and so prevent them from obtaining the wished-for prize: with

* Gospel, verses 26, 27. † Epistle, verse 5. ‡ Collect.

equal diligence should we put away those sins and wickednesses which hinder us in our Christian course, and may altogether prevent us from obtaining the salvation which our Blessed Saviour holds out to us. We know also how careful the runners would be to keep their bodies in temperance and subjection, always in a fit state for action should their time of trial come suddenly or unexpectedly, (see 1 Cor. ix. 24,)—so does the epistle enjoin upon us the virtue of moderation, bidding us remember that "the Lord is at hand;"* it teaches us that while we rejoice in the prospect of the prize, and in the Lord Who offers it, we must be careful to keep our hopes and affections fixed upon it, not letting them be entangled with earthly things, but standing as those who "wait for the coming of their Lord." We know,* however, how fruitless would have been all their precautions, had not the runners had bodily strength given them of God,—so neither can we win our race, unless God be with us by His mighty power to succour and defend us. It is to obtain this mighty aid, that we have been lately led to God's appointed means of grace. (2nd and 3rd Sundays in Advent.) Prayers, and Scriptures, and holy Sacraments, are intended to secure to our souls the invisible though powerful advent and presence of Christ. Unless, therefore, by our devout use of them, we have gained this blessing, they will be unprofitable to us; we can neither hope rightly to commemorate His first, nor joyfully to hail His second advent. How appropriate then is the petition of the collect, that He Who came

* Verse 5.

among us to deliver us from the punishment of our sins, would now come among us to deliver us from their power, so that they may not hinder His gracious purposes towards us.*

We see in the morning lesson how the Jewish people made light of the salvation offered to them by God; turning away from the Lord Who bought them, to "trust in the shadow of Egypt."† Under this figure is represented to us the constant propensity of God's people to turn back to the world and its temptations; and by it would the Church warn us on this day to "cast off our sins and wickedness," and follow in the way of Him Who came to save us. To such as, on the contrary, do not turn aside out of the right path, but cast away everything that would lead them astray, are addressed the promises made by the "Holy One of Israel."‡ For them the Lord "waits that He may be gracious."‖ Though He should give them the "bread of adversity and water of affliction,§ yet it is only that He may lead them safely to the attainment of that salvation which He has in store for them. He will "bind up the breach of His people, and heal the stroke of their wounds."¶ He, the true Light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world, will be to them as the light of the sun sevenfold, in that solemn night, when the Lord "shall cause His glorious voice to be heard, and shall shew the lighting down of His arm, with the indignation of His fierce anger, and with the flame of a devouring fire, and with scattering, and tempest, and hailstones."**

* Collect. † Morn. Less. verse 2. ‡ verse 15, &c.; ‖ verse 18; § verse 20; ¶ verse 26; ** verse 30.

Still more does the evening lesson confirm and strengthen our faith in the mighty salvation which has been wrought for us; for here the union of the divine and human natures in the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ (which is the ground of all our hopes) is prophetically spoken of. Here we behold Him as a King, reigning in righteousness, and as a Man, our refuge and hiding-place.*

The happy and saving effects of our Saviour's second advent are likewise foretold in this lesson,† which also contains warnings and denunciations against those who live in ease, careless and regardless of the salvation which He has purchased for them.‡

In the holy gospel‖ we have the testimony of St John the Baptist to the divinity of our Blessed Lord, as a suitable subject with which to conclude our preparation for Christmas-day.

Let us then on this day bear in mind, that He Who was born in the manger at Bethlehem is none other than the great and mighty God, Who is able as well as willing to save to the uttermost those who come to Him. He came down from heaven for us men and for our salvation. Even now He "stands among us,"§ though we see Him not, succouring and defending us in our Christian course,¶ and He will enable us to finish it with joy, if only we lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and run with patience the race that is set before us. (Heb. xii. 1.)

* Even. Less. verses 1, 2; † verses 15, &c.; ‡ verse 9.
‖ Verse 19; § verse 26. ¶ Collect.

Christmas Day.

Epistle, Heb. i. 1.
Gospel, St. John, i. 1.
Psalms, xix., xliv., lxxxv., lxxxix., cx., cxxxi.
Morn. Less., Isa. ix. 1-8; St. Luke, ii. 1-15.
Even. Less. Isa. vii. 10-17; Tit. iii. 4-9.

To-DAY the Church wakes up our most joyful songs of praise and thanksgiving, for to-day she brings us good tidings of great joy! During the last four weeks she has been shewing to us the terrors of the Lord, and so making us feel our need of a Saviour; she has been teaching us that God's infinite justice must be satisfied, but that for this satisfaction no human sacrifice can be sufficient,—"no man may deliver his brother, or make agreement unto God for him." To-day, she tells us of One born into the world, Who being God to save, as well as Man to suffer, is able to make that perfect sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction, which our sins had required. Thus it is upon the doctrine of the union of the divine and human natures in the Person of our Blessed Saviour that we found all our hopes; and it is this doctrine which the Church would especially teach us on Christmas-day; for while we celebrate His coming in the flesh as perfect Man, the services remind us that He is also perfect God.

Let us, then, in humble devotion and with the deepest reverence, follow the teaching of Holy Scripture on this point, remembering that though the incarnation of our Lord (*i. e.* God being made flesh) is a mystery far above our understanding, yet it is an article of our creed which every one of us must receive by faith.

In the portion of Scripture appointed for the epistle, St. Paul unfolds to us this mystery. He tells us, that He Whom we call the Son of God existed with the Father before the foundation of the world,* and therefore He is eternal; that He was appointed heir of all things,† and that by Him the worlds were made, therefore He is Almighty. The apostle would also make known to us His perfect union with the divine nature, for he calls Him, "the Brightness of His Father's glory," and we know that the brightness which proceeds from any great light, must be of the same nature as the light itself; and then by immediately afterwards speaking of the Son as an "image" or resemblance of the Father, he would go on to teach us that with this unity of nature there is also a distinction of Persons.‡ Again, in the adoration of the heavenly hosts, we have an additional proof of the glory and majesty of this Divine Person.‖

The same truth is again fully declared to us by St. John in that portion of his gospel appointed for this day. In the former part of it, the Son of God, or second Person of the Holy Trinity, is called "the Word," which title was never applied by the Jews to any but to the

* Epistle, verse 2; † verse 2; ‡ verse 3; ‖ verse 7.

Divine Being. He is said to have been from the beginning "with God;" to be indeed "very God," and to have proved Himself to be so, by the exertion of divine power as the Creator of all things.* So is the perfect Godhead of our Blessed Lord abundantly revealed to us. His perfect Manhood is as fully shewn to us in the latter part of this Scripture, where we read that "the Word" was made flesh, and dwelt among us,† losing nothing of His own glory, though partaking of our nature and infirmities. Thus by the infinite mercy of God were the divine and human natures united in one Person, that man might trust in a Saviour, Who is at once human to suffer, and divine to save.

And not only by revelation, but also by prophecy is Jesus Christ preached to us this day. The lessons from Isaiah, read to us both morning and evening, though written seven hundred and fifty years before the birth of our Saviour, describe to us the character, attributes, and nature of that Divine Person, Who, as on this day, was born into the world. The first five verses speak of the light and joy which should attend His coming,‡ and figuratively describe His perfect victory over sin and the devil.‖ Then we read of His wonderful birth, and mysterious names. We hear Him called "child" of man, yet "Son" of God, governing all things—Son of God, yet also Himself the mighty God, the everlasting Father. Rightly, then, is He called "wonderful," whose nature is so awfully mysterious; "Counsellor," because He is the very wisdom and word of God; and "Prince of

* Gospel, verse 8; † verse 14. ‡ Morn. Less. verse 2; ‖ verses 4, 5.

Peace," is a name well suited to Him Who came to "make peace" for us, Who both gave us and left us His peace. (St. John, xiv. 27.) In the evening lesson, the manner of His birth, and the history of the incarnation are clearly foretold. The former in that verse which proclaims Him "Son of the Virgin"—the latter, in that one word "Emmanuel"—God with us.*

The proper psalms are selected to set forth, by type and prophecy, the birth of the Divine Saviour, and also to raise our minds in praise and thanksgiving for the mercies of this blessed day.

The nineteenth Psalm is a description of the glorious firmament of Heaven, and of the sun and stars which God has placed there. In Holy Scripture the natural world is often made to represent the spiritual world, and things seen are put to teach us of things unseen. This psalm, therefore, speaks to us of the Sun of Righteousness, Who, as on this day, rose over a dark and ignorant world;† at Whose birth a new star appeared, and Whose gospel, like the light, spread itself into every corner of the earth.

The forty-fifth Psalm was originally sung in honour of King Solomon, and of his marriage with Pharoah's daughter. Christians, on this day, sing it in honour of their Heavenly King, and of His union with the Church His spouse. In this psalm our Lord's appearance in the flesh is described.‡ Then the successful propagation of His gospel and perfect victory over His enemies are foretold.‖ Lastly,§ the gather-

* Even. Less. verse 14. † Ps. xix. 5, 6. ‡ Verse 3; ‖ verses 4-9; § verses 10-18.

ing in of the Gentile Churches (who are represented under the image of "King's daughters") is prophesied of, and their united chorus of praise and thanksgiving ends the psalm.

The eighty-fifth Psalm speaks of the incarnation of Christ—the benefits it brought into the world—and the manner in which we should apply them to ourselves. Thus, it is through the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ, that our offence is forgiven,* and God's anger is "made to cease"† from us; so that "mercy and truth meet together—righteousness and peace kiss each other. But that these blessings may be ours, so must each one of us be turned to Him, and each one of us must pray: "Shew us Thy mercy, O Lord, and grant us Thy salvation."‡

The promises made to David and to his seed in the eighty-ninth Psalm, refer to Him of Whom David was the type, and in Him to us His members. To-day, then, on which we celebrate the coming of the true David, do we very fitly glorify God for the blessed promises we enjoy through Him.

The one hundred and tenth Psalm is a prophetic description of the kingdom and glories of the Messiah. In it is an allusion to His human nature which well suits the character of this day's festival. It was in the human nature which He this day took upon Him, that "He drank of the brook" of affliction,‖ that human nature might lift up its head. He came to suffer as Son of Man, that man might be glorified as Son of God.

* Verse 2; † verse 4; ‡ verse 7.
‖ Ps. cx. 7.

The one hundred and thirty-second Psalm, which is the last of those selected for this day, contains the promise made to David that "of the fruit of his body, He would set upon his seat."* This promise, though first fulfilled in Solomon, as a type, met with its real and high accomplishment when the shepherds of Bethlehem Ephratah proclaimed the birth of the King of kings. Thus, may we on this day use this psalm, saying in its very words, "Lo, we have heard of the same at Ephratah, and found it in the wood."†

Having now contemplated our Saviour in His divine nature as God of God, Light of Light, and very God of very God, we turn to the narrative of His birth, as read to us in the second lesson for this morning. We shall now be prepared to join in the angel's hymn, and then with less danger of irreverence, shall we venture to look upon Him as a little child, subject to the pains, and sorrows, and infirmities of our nature. With our minds filled with the thought of His divinity, the contemplation of Him in infancy and weakness will only add to our wonder and adoration at the infinite love which could stoop so low for our salvation, and we shall be ready to exclaim, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all the benefits which He hath done unto me?"

The services of this day give the answer.

Christ, they teach us, was born in the flesh, that we might be born again in the spirit;‡ therefore, by striving daily to grow in our new and spiritual life, shall we best show forth our gratitude to Him Who gave it.

* Verse 12; † verse 6; and Micah v. 2. ‡ Collect.

As Christ, when He had been born in the flesh, grew up to manhood in His new and human nature, so we, who have been born again by the washing of regeneration in Holy Baptism,* must daily grow in our sanctified nature by the renewing of the Holy Ghost. Day by day, and little by little, must each member of Christ strive to mortify all those evil and corrupt affections which come from his old nature, and to grow in all the holy thoughts and good resolutions, which are the fruits of his new birth, praying, in the words of the collect, that the Holy Spirit would assist him in this great work. So may we hope that the fulness of the blessings brought to us on Christmas-day, may shed itself over our whole lives; that having received "power to become the sons of God," through the mercy of Him Who, as on this day, became Son of Man,† we may be daily renewed in the image of Him that created us, until we come to the "measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

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‡ St. Stephen's Day.
‡ St. John the Evangelist's Day.
‡ The Innocents' Day.

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* 2nd Even. Less. verses, 4, 5. † Gospel, verse 12.
‡ See Part III., "*The Minor Festivals.*"

Sunday after Christmas Day.

Epistle, Galatians, iv. 4. *Morning Lesson*, Isa. xxxvii.
Gospel, St. Matt. i. 18. *Evening Lesson*, Isa. xxxviii.

ONE day is not sufficient to celebrate the glorious festival of Christ's Nativity. The whole forty days which succeed in some measure keep up a spirit of holy and joyous gratitude; but the octave, or eight days after Christmas-day, and the Sunday which falls within it, are most especially set apart for meditating on Christ's Incarnation, and the benefits we derive from it, as adopted children of God.

Again on this day does the gospel relate to us the mysterious narrative of Christ's Birth. In it do we find the accomplishment of the prophecies read to us on Christmas-day. By the mighty power of God, the Son of God becomes Son of Man — God made flesh; and dwells among us, redeeming and sanctifying His people, and in His very Name bringing salvation.*

The epistle explains to us, by a type or figure, the blessed change which passed upon mankind at the Birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. Before that time the Church of God had been in

* Gospel, verse 21.

bondage under the ceremonies and ordinances of the Jewish dispensation. Like an heir, who is not yet come to the enjoyment of his possessions, it knew not the fulness of its privileges,* for it saw Christ as through a glass darkly, through types and by figures; and, like a slave, whose service is one of hard tasks and great severity, it had been forced to obey by severe penalties, painful rites, and burdensome institutions. Only when Jesus Christ was born into the world were God's people released from this hard bondage, and translated into the "glorious liberty of the children of God." By Himself obeying all the ordinances of the law, and suffering what was due to them, as breakers of the law, He redeemed them from its curse, and became the "end of the law for righteousness to all them that believe." From servants they became sons; and, from holding their heavenly inheritance under tutors and governors, they became "heirs of God, through Christ."† Well, therefore, may we hail with joy and gratitude unspeakable the day which brought Him down from heaven, giving light and life unto the world, bringing "peace on earth, and good-will to men."

But the collect goes on to teach us how He Whose infinite mercy bestowed such blessings on the world in general, has provided means whereby each one of His servants may apply them to himself.

The holy Sacrament of Baptism, by which we were regenerated or born again, has made us members of Christ, and therefore children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven.

* Epistle, verses 2, 3; † verse 7.

Every one whom God has brought into His Church by Baptism, has then a part in the benefits of Christ's Incarnation, and may call himself by no less a title than the adopted son of God.* He is taken into God's family, trained up under His care, and daily "renewed"* and sustained by that other Sacrament and those other means of grace which convey the Holy Spirit into the heart of God's adopted children.

This is the thought which the Church would have with us at this holy season; and, as it is one which even the youngest of her members may bring home to himself, let us each strive to improve it to the best of our power.

Let us realize to ourselves the high privilege of having been adopted into the family of God,—of being permitted to call Him our Father, and to come to Him in all our wants and difficulties, through His Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ.

But, amidst our blessings and our privileges, we must not forget our duties and our dangers. Those who share the rights and advantages of a family, must also bear a part in its common duties, and join in resisting its common enemies: so it is with the children of God. Having "received the adoption of sons,"† their obedience is required by God under the gospel as it was under the law, only it must be more willing and cheerful,—as the obedience of a son is more willing and cheerful than that of a slave. And in their obedience they will meet with difficulty, and even with danger. The devil, who is the common enemy of God, and of His

* Collect. † Epistle, verse 5.

adopted children, thinks no member of Christ too small or insignificant to be the object of his attacks. "Like a roaring lion, he ever goeth about, seeking whom he may devour." Therefore, all the children of God must stand fast in the faith; they must quit them like men, and be strong, continually watching and praying, and resisting his temptations. We must "resist the devil, and he will flee from us."

This is one of the lessons which we gather from that portion of the Old Testament history which the Church has selected for this day. The blasphemies and threats of Sennacherib and his army, remind us of the devil's unceasing rage and malice towards mankind;* and, in Hezekiah, we see the picture of a devoted servant of God, resisting the enemy, not in his own strength, but by faith and prayer, and complete reliance on God's almighty power.† We see, also, how God supports and protects His servants who so trust in Him, raising them to new life and daily renewing and strengthening them.‡

From the services of this day we may then take encouragement.

God, as at this time, did "send His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him." (See Baptismal Service.) Let us not then doubt, but earnestly believe, that if we follow Him "as dear children" fighting manfully against the world, the flesh, and the devil, He Who has "received us as His own by adoption," will continue to renew us by His Holy Spirit,‖ and embrace us with the arms of

* Morn. Less. verse 4; † verse 14, &c.
‡ Even. Less. verse 5. ‖ Collect.

His mercy, until He finally gives unto us the blessing of eternal life.*

God's own words assure us that He will not "fail His people, neither will He forsake His inheritance," (Psalm xciv. 14;) — that "like as a father pitieth His own children, so is the Lord merciful unto them that fear Him," (Psalm cxiii. 13;) and that it is our "Father's good pleasure to give us His kingdom." (St. Luke, xii. 33.)

* Baptismal Service.

The Circumcision of Christ.

Epistle, Romans, iv. 8.
Gospel, St. Luke, ii. 15.
Morning Lessons, Genesis, xvii.; Romans, ii.
Evening Lessons, Deut. x. 12; Colossians, ii.

EACH step in our Blessed Lord's life, from His nativity to His ascension, has its part in the great work of our redemption, and is, therefore, to be separately remembered with thankfulness and devotion.

The first act of our Blessed Saviour's life was His circumcision. At eight days old He underwent this painful Jewish rite for our sakes, and to free us from the observance of it; therefore do we celebrate, by a separate service, the day when our Redeemer's suffering released us from the severe penalties of the Mosaic law, and placed us under the merciful terms of the gospel covenant.

That we may the better understand what circumcision was, and why our Lord underwent it, we must look to the portions of Holy Scripture appointed for this day.

The history of its institution in the time of Abraham is read to us in the first lesson for this morning. This chapter shews us how God called Abraham from among his idolatrous

neighbours, to make of him a great nation, which should keep alive His Name, and out of which should in time proceed the Deliverer of mankind.* It was His will that the people whom He thus set apart should be marked by a sign peculiar to themselves, by which they might be perpetually reminded of the covenant existing between themselves and their Creator. Such a sign was circumcision.

As being God's own special mark, it was a pledge of love and favour on His part; but, as implying something to be renounced or cast away, it was on their part a token of the entire devotion and self-renunciation which God would require at their hands. It is this second part of the covenant of circumcision which Moses would urge upon the chosen people in the first lesson appointed for this evening. He speaks of the love and devotion which God expects from His marked and chosen servants.† He tells them that the outward part of circumcision will profit them nothing unless it is accompanied by that circumcision of the heart,‡ that cutting off and casting away of evil tempers and bad thoughts, of which the outward ceremony is but a sign. Thus were our forefathers compelled to discharge the literal and painful part of this covenant, as well as the spiritual, and whosoever did not, "that soul was to be cut off from Israel."‖ From this state of painful bondage did the circumcision of our Lord deliver us.

When Christ our Head§ underwent, as on

* 1st Morn. Less. verses 4–9. † 1st Even. Less. verse 12; ‡ verse 16. ‖ 1st Morn. Lesson, verse 14. § 2nd Even. Less. verse 10.

this day, the rite of circumcision, we who are His members were circumcised with Him. In the words of the second evening lesson, we who have "been buried with Him in baptism" have been circumcised with the circumcision of Christ, and have therefore discharged the first part of the covenant as truly as if we had been circumcised in our own persons.* Thus it is, that as baptized members of our circumcised Lord, we are brought into that new covenant with God which is described in the epistle for this day.

Through the "righteousness of faith," our "uncircumcision is reckoned unto us for circumcision;" our sins are no more imputed unto us, and if only we walk "in the faith of our forefather Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised,† our faith will be reckoned unto us for righteousness."

But the second lesson for the morning warns the Jews against the sin of boasting of their external privileges while they neglected the spirit of them;‡ and so would the Church on this day warn us through their example. In vain, then, has our baptism admitted us into covenant with God, and applied to us the benefits of Christ's circumcision, unless we ourselves fulfil the spiritual part of the covenant, unless our circumcision be "that of the heart and spirit," "whose praise is not of men, but of God."‖ If the circumcised people of Israel were required to "circumcise their hearts," to walk in all God's ways and to serve Him,§ how

* 2nd Even. Less. verses 12, 13. † Epistle, verse 12.
‡ 2nd Morn. Less. verse 13; ‖ verse 29.
§ 1st Even. Less.

much more are we, who are urged to it not by fear, but by the grateful sense of what our Lord and Saviour has done for us.

These are the thoughts with which we should read the account of our Saviour's circumcision in the gospel for this day's service. While, in the deepest reverence and gratitude we behold the holy Child Jesus "made obedient to the law,"* and suffering for our sakes, let our care be so to conform to the spirit of this ordinance, that we lose not our part in what He then underwent for us. Let us consider what secret sin or besetting temptation we may circumcise or cast away, in order that we may be more conformed to the image of our circumcised Saviour; and having done this, let us not allow this festival to pass away without strong resolutions and earnest prayers to renounce and forsake it.

Thus does the Church show us how every step in our Redeemer's life is to advance us one step in our spiritual growth. His birth in the flesh spoke to us of our new birth in the spirit. His first act in the flesh teaches us that the first act of our Christian life is to cut off and mortify all worldly and carnal lusts, so that our hearts and all our members may in all things be made obedient to His blessed will.

* Collect.

The Epiphany.

Epistle, Ephesians, iii. 1. *Morning Lessons*, Isaiah, lx.; St. Luke, iii. 1–23.
Gospel, St. Matt. ii. 1. *Evening Lessons*, Isaiah, xlix.; St. John, ii. 1–12.

THIS is a festival of especial joy to all the members of the Gentile Church.

On this day Christ our Saviour was manifested or made known to the eastern Magi, and through them to the whole heathen world which they represented. Through the epiphany of Christ, we, amongst other nations of the Gentiles, were turned from darkness to light, from the power of Satan unto God, and received an inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in Him. (Acts, xxvi. 18.) Therefore does the Church commemorate with holy joy the manifestation of the Blessed Jesus; she teaches us to walk in the light which He has made to shine upon us, praying that it may lead us as it did those early Gentile converts into the very presence of our Lord.

But to obtain their blessing we must copy their example, as it is set before us in the gospel for the day. They persevered through the dangers of a long and perilous journey, obediently following the directions of the star which

God had given them for a guide, until it brought them safely to the place where the young Child was.* Christ's holy religion is the guiding star which directs Christians in their long and troublesome journey through this world. By the light of His gospel and of His Church, and of His Holy Spirit acting through sacred ordinances, He teaches us what we ought to do, and then gives us grace and power faithfully to fulfil the same; and we must persevere in following this light if we would arrive safely at the place where our Lord and Saviour is. According to the measure in which we act up to this holy light, will he manifest Himself to us by faith here, and prepare us for the "full fruition of His glorious Godhead"† hereafter.

And when the wise men had found our Lord, we read how they had faith to worship, as the God and Saviour of mankind, Him, Who to outward appearance was only a little child;‡ and so, when we come into the presence of Christ our Saviour, in His temple on earth, we must by faith believe our God and Saviour to be amongst us, though not visible to our bodily senses. We must offer of the best of our earthly substance in the place where He has chosen to place His Name, believing that He is there to receive our gifts, though we see Him not; and to our temporal offerings we must join those sacrifices of the heart which the gifts of the Magi typify or represent. Pure love and charity which is intended by the gold, ardent devotion which is typified by the incense, and the complete mortification of our corrupt nature which the myrrh signifies, must be united

* Verse 9. † Collect. ‡ Gospel, verse 11.

in the worship of those who would present their body, soul, and spirit, a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice unto Him.

There are also two other manifestations of our Blessed Saviour, which (being supposed to have happened on the same day, though not in the same year) are also commemorated by the Church at this time. The first of these is His baptism, of which the second lesson for the morning gives an account.* On this occasion do we find the three Persons of the Blessed Trinity combined to shew forth the glory and divinity of Jesus Christ. The Father's voice from heaven is heard declaring His divine mission, and accepting His atonement, while the Holy Spirit in a visible form alights and rests upon His Sacred Person.

Again, in the second lesson for the evening,† does our Blessed Lord "manifest forth" His glory by the performance of His first miracle in Cana of Galilee. By this miracle He shewed forth the perfect divinity of His nature; and He taught His disciples that He will ever make Himself known to them, to bless and help them in every circumstance of their lives, if only they seek His presence and His favour.

In these manifestations of our Lord which we are now commemorating, we see an accomplishment of the glorious prophecies of Isaiah selected for this day. These prophecies will not be finally fulfilled until all the kingdoms of this world have become the "kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ;" but their accomplishment began when, as on this day, "the Gentiles first came to His light, and kings to

* Verses 21–23. † Verse 11.

the brightness of His rising."* From that time the gates of Christ's Church have been open continually to bring in the forces of the Gentiles,† receiving every soul that seeks "the door" (see St. John, x.) to enter in. The "sons of the stranger‡ are being received into God's house;" a little one is becoming a thousand,‖ and the grain of mustard seed is growing into a large and spreading tree. We ourselves, amongst the other "isles of the Gentiles," have been brought to wait on the name of the Lord, so that the Lord is to us an everlasting light, and our God our glory.§

In the same manner do the promises in the evening lesson apply to us as members of a Gentile Church. Christ bids us go forth from the darkness in which we have been prisoners,¶ for that He will have mercy upon us and lead us. Our Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob, the Holy One of Israel, declares that He has heard us in an accepted time, and in the day of salvation has succoured us.** He will gather His people together,—setting up His standard amongst them,—making kings to be their nursing fathers, and queens their nursing mothers.††

Such is also the gracious meaning of those passages in the epistle, where it is said that the Gentiles are made fellow-heirs of the same Body, and partakers of the promise of Christ, through His gospel;‡‡ that to them are preached the unsearchable riches of Christ, and that they have now boldness and access through the faith that is in Him.‖‖

* 1st Morn. Less. verse 3; † verse 11; ‡ verse 12; ‖ verse 22; § verse 19; ¶ verse 9; ** verses 7, 8; †† verses 22, 23; ‡‡ verse 6; ‖‖ verses 8, 12.

Thus did Christ, "the true Light," come to give light to every man that cometh into the world. To the whole Christian Church, and to each one of us her members, does He say in the words of the lesson for this day—"Arise, shine, for thy Light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.* Let us then strive to keep this holy festival by walking as children of the Light, letting our light shine in that particular position, however humble, in which His Providence has placed us; and let us all pray that He Who, as on this day, did first manifest His only-begotten Son to the Gentiles, would continue to "cast His bright beams of light upon His Church, that being enlightened by its holy doctrine, we may so walk in the light of His truth, that we may at length attain to the light of everlasting life." (Collect for St. John the Evangelist's day.)

* Even. Less. verse 1.

First Sunday after the Epiphany.

Epistle, Rom. xii. 1. *Morning Lesson*, Isa. xliv.
Gospel, St. Luke, ii. 41. *Evening Lesson*, Isa. xlvi.

During the past festival we have been rejoicing in the light which Christ brought to lighten every man that cometh into the world. Now, we have to learn how to walk in that light, so that it may not have shone in vain for us; for as well might we expect the light of the sun to force us into a safe path without our own exertions, as that the Sun of Righteousness should guide us into the way of peace without diligence and carefulness on our part. This is what the Church endeavours to impress upon us in the Sunday services after the Epiphany; for while the gospels and proper lessons still continue to shew forth the glory and majesty of the Divine Saviour, the epistles supply us with advice and exhortations, which, bring written by St. Paul for his Gentile converts, are suited to all whom Christ has brought out of darkness into His marvellous light.

So it is with the services of this day. If we rightly understand and apply them, they will teach us how to profit by that light which we have now received.

The collect prays for light to see our duty and strength to perform it. We learn from the epistle, that an entire surrender of self, and submission to God, are required of all those who call themselves children of light. Love of the world, and conformity to its wicked practices, obscure the light which God has made to shine in our hearts; therefore the children of light are not to be "conformed to this world, but to be transformed by the renewing of their minds."* Pride and self-conceit cannot reign in the hearts of those who depend for everything on the light of God's grace; therefore the children of light must watch, lest they "think of themselves more highly than they ought to think."† In short, if we would keep the light of God shining brightly in our hearts, we must renounce or subdue everything that would prevent us from "yielding up ourselves a lively sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto Him."‡

We read in the lesson for this day how the people of Israel forfeited the light of God's favour, by making idols of wood and stone to worship and bow down to them;‖ but do not we, the Israel of God, fall into the same danger whenever we set up idols in our hearts, whenever we suffer the love of the world, or of self, to take God's place in that soul where He has commanded His light to shine? If, therefore, we would walk as children of light, we must "keep ourselves" from all such idols, (1 St. John, v. 21,) and, giving up ourselves to His service, strive diligently to do our duty in that particular position of His Body the Church where He

* Verse 1; † verse 3; ‡ verse 1.
‖ Morn. Less. verse 17.

has placed us. All members of that Church have not the same office;* to each one He gives an appointed task, and with it the degree of light necessary to perform it. Neither does he lay upon us our duties all at once, but one by one, and little by little. As the collect says, He gives us first grace "to perceive and know what we ought to do," and then, when He sees we are in earnest and willing to do what we know to be right, He gives us "grace and power faithfully to perform the same."†

If we are thus sincerely seeking to know God, that we may do His will, the awful manifestations of our Redeemer's power and glory, which are brought before us in this day's lessons, will be a source of comfort, not of terror. The great God, "the first and the last,"‡ like Whom there is none else,‖ is speaking to His chosen people,§ the Christian Church, of which Israel is the type. He tells us not to fear, for that He hath chosen us, and He will help us. When He called us by a new name, He poured upon us the water of life;¶ and still He continues to refresh us with the blessings of His Holy Spirit. He hath "blotted out as a cloud our transgressions, and as a thick cloud our sins;"** He, Who maketh all things, hath made us and redeemed us, and to our hoary hairs will carry and deliver us."†† He it is, "Whose righteousness is brought near," and "Whose salvation is not far off." He it is Whom we find in the gospel for this day, manifesting Himself in His Father's house, to do His Father's

* Epistle, verse 4. † Collect. ‡ Morn. Less. verse 6.
‖ Even. Less. verse 9. § Morn. Less. verse 2;
¶ verses 3—6; ** verse 22. †† Even. Less. verse 4.

business.* There does He still continue to manifest Himself to His "chosen seed," doing His Father's work, by enlightening those that are in darkness, and converting those that are in sin. Only let us all make the most of the light which He vouchsafes—first cleansing out of our hearts everything that might obscure it, praying for its heavenly guidance, and then walking as it guides. So may we hope that the light, which first dawned upon us at the Epiphany, will lead us on from grace to grace, shining more and more into our hearts unto the perfect day.

* Gospel, verse 49.

Second Sunday after the Epiphany.

Epistle, Rom. xii. 6.
Gospel, St. John, ii. 1.

Morning Lesson, Isa. li.
Evening Lesson, Isa. liii.

ONE of the first blessings which the light of Christ brings to those who walk in it, is that of peace. The Day-spring from on high came to "guide our feet into the way of peace," as well as to "enlighten those that are in darkness." (St. Luke, ii. 79.) This is why the second Sunday after the Epiphany speaks to us of peace, praying for it, and guiding us in its paths. To obtain the peace of God, for which the collect prays, we must believe that it is "He Which governs all things both in heaven and earth;" for nothing but this will support us in the changes and chances of this mortal life. From such trials the children of light are not more free than others. All the days of their life, even from their very childhood, God lays His cross upon them; but by the light of His grace, shining in their hearts, He shews them how all these things work together for good to those who love God; and so their minds are kept in perfect peace, because they trust in Him. "They are not afraid of any evil tidings, because their heart standeth fast, believing in the

Lord." But to be thus at peace with God, and with ourselves, we must live at peace with our brethren. This it is which the epistle for this day enforces upon us. Continuing the chapter of last Sunday, it teaches us to consider ourselves as members of one great Body, of which Christ is the Head. From this figure we see how the peace and well-being of the whole Church is influenced by the conduct of each of its members separately, just as the health and rest of our whole body depend on the soundness of each separate part. We learn that every member of Christ's Body has received gifts, "differing according to the grace that is in him," by the faithful or unfaithful use of which he may be influencing, more than he is aware, the peace and well-being of his fellow members. How diligently, then, should we observe the rules which the apostle here gives to every member of the Church of Christ, striving, each in our several callings, to improve the gifts which may have fallen to our share.

To be content with that calling, whatever it may be, is the first duty He enjoins.* When one member goes out of his place, wishing or trying to do the work of another, he acts against the Providence of God, and disturbs the peace of the whole body. If, then, we would be useful members of Christ's Church, we must be content to teach or to learn, to rule or to obey, to work or to stand still, just as the will of God disposes of us; remembering, for our encouragement, that as the weaker and smaller portions of the body are not the less

* Epistle, verses 5—8.

valuable to us, so no member of Christ is rendered less precious in His sight, on account of the lowliness or insignificance of his station.

Diligence* in doing the work appointed us is another duty of Christ's members; for we know that the deadness or inactivity of a single limb would be apt to bring disease and confusion into the whole body. "Fervour in spirit," doing all things and suffering all things for the glory of God, are also laid down as marks of Christ's true members. Again, the members of Christ, being so closely linked together, must be "kindly affectioned one to another,"† sympathizing in each other's cares and joys, as if they were their own. "When one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; and when one member is honoured, all the members rejoice with it." (1 Cor. xii. 26.)

If every member were thus living together in unity of spirit and in the bond of peace, "holding the Head from which all the body by joints and bands hath nourishment ministered, how would the whole body daily increase with the increase of God!" (Col. ii. 19.)

Our Lord's manifestation at the marriage in Cana in Galilee is again selected for our meditation this day; not only as being appropriate to the season, but also as having an especial reference to the services of this day. The holy estate of matrimony is another emblem or figure of the mystical union between Christ and His Church. It represents the peace and harmony which His faithful members enjoy here, and the still higher degree of concord and happiness which is in store for them in heaven;

* Epistle, verse 11; † verse 10.

and so does this miracle convey to us a high and holy lesson. It teaches us to live as in His presence, making Him our guest on every occasion of our lives, and "doing whatsoever He saith unto us,"* without doubt or questioning. This, if we do, He Who changed the water into wine, will change the mixed and uncertain happiness we enjoy even now in His Church militant for the far higher bliss and glory of His Church triumphant.

In the lessons for this day, Christ our Lord is manifested to us as the Saviour and Redeemer of His Church—the one great Mediator upon Whom we found all our hopes of pardon and of peace.

In the morning lesson, He is addressing us as His people, the "seed of Abraham," according to the promise. He bids us look to Him as the "Rock whence we are hewn,"† the Corner Stone of our salvation, Who will bring comfort and peace to all who "trust in His arm."‡

Even the reproach and revilings of men"‖ will He not suffer to disturb the peace of those in whose heart is His law.§ They are comforted by the thought of their Redeemer's power. He once "dried up the waters of the great deep,"¶ that His redeemed might pass over; and He will "bring His people again to the Heavenly Zion with everlasting joy upon their heads."**

Having now contemplated our Blessed Redeemer in His power and glory, the evening lesson manifests Him to us in His humiliation, sacrificing Himself for us, and bearing in His

* Gospel, verse 5. † Verse 1; ‡ verse 5; ‖ verse 7; § verse 7; ¶ verse 10; ** verse 11.

pure and spotless Body the sins of the whole world. This chapter describes the circumstances of our Saviour's sufferings so exactly, that it is rather a history of His passion than a prophecy. We read of His "being taken from prison unto judgment,"* of His being numbered with the transgressors, and of the "agony of His soul" in the garden.†

Let us never approach this account without the deepest gratitude and reverence, remembering the part which each one of His members has in His blessed passion, mourning over the sins which caused Him to suffer, and praying that we may be amongst "the many" whom His sufferings will justify.‡

We learn then, on this day, how the Lord, "Who governs all things in heaven and earth," humbled Himself to the death of the Cross, that He might reconcile us in one body unto God,‖ (Eph. ii. 16,) so making peace for us. And we are also taught, that if we walk as faithful members of Him, "following after the things which make for peace, and the things wherewith one may edify another," our Intercessor will mercifully "hear our supplications, and grant us His peace all the days of our life."§

* Verse 8; † verse 11; ‡ verse 11.
‖ See Epistle. § Collect.

Third Sunday after the Epiphany.

Epistle, Rom. xii. 16.
Gospel, St. Matt. viii. 1.

Morning Lesson, Isa. lv.
Evening Lesson, Isa. lvi.

When the light of the sun has guided us safely into the right path, its next use is to discover to us our dangers, and shew us how to avoid them. So it is with the light of God's grace. Having guided us into the paths of holiness* and peace,† its next step is to shew us the dangers which surround us, and to teach us where to look for safety.

Our chief danger lies in the weakness of our nature; therefore, in the collect, we beseech Almighty God "mercifully to look upon our infirmities." Then the epistle cautions us against the particular failings into which the infirmities of our nature would be most likely to lead us. It points to the pride‡ and malice‖ of our own hearts, as the enemies from whom we have most to fear; for "pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall." These are the root of all evil, the very beginning of all sin; they are the tools which the devil makes use of to ruin men's souls; and

* See Services for 1st Sunday after Epiphany.
† See Services for 2nd Sunday after Epiphany.
‡ Verse 16; ‖ verse 19.

they are the more dangerous, because they do not come upon us all at once, but little by little, taking us in their snares before we are aware, and making even our best actions and intentions to be sometimes an occasion of falling. Thus a spirit of self satisfaction in anything we do, when it is felt apart from gratitude to God, Who has enabled us both to "will and to do," will lead us on to pride and self confidence; therefore, let us watch that we be not "wise in our own conceits."* When we think we have gained any advantage, or risen one step in our spiritual course, let us immediately ascribe all the glory to God, saying, "Not I, but the grace of God which was with me." And as it is with pride, so also is it with anger. Our self-love first persuades us that we are hardly dealt with, or injured by our neighbours; if not immediately checked, this thought will lead us on to anger—anger will be followed by revenge;† and so begins the sin which has been known to end in murder. To avoid so sad a fall we must follow the apostle's injunction of trying to live peaceably with all men;‡ and if others will not live peaceably with us, we must never "recompense evil for evil;"‖ rather should we try to soften their hearts by kindness and forbearance, for as fire softens the hardest substance, so will repeated offices of kindness and charity at last melt even the stony heart of the enemy.§

From what we have now learnt of the nature of sin and of its dangers, we see why Holy Scripture often compares it to leprosy, and

* Epistle, verse 16; † verse 19; ‡ verse 18; ‖ verse 17; § verse 20.

why the cure of the leper is especially set before us in the gospel for this day. Leprosy is a loathsome and deadly disease, which it is beyond the power of human skill to cure. Sin is that fatal and deadly disease of the soul, which none but the Saviour of mankind can heal. Leprosy does not shew itself all at once, but begins with a small and apparently trifling spot, which gradually spreads itself over the whole body; just as sin has its origin in a bad thought, and what we should call trifling fault, and then insensibly creeps over the whole soul. The leper, by the Jewish law, was shut out from the society of his fellow men; by the laws of God, the hardened and impenitent sinner shuts himself out from communion with the saints on earth and blessed spirits in heaven. This deadly disease still clings even about regenerate Christians. It is the greatest danger which besets the path of the children of light; from our very childhood its spots are continually shewing themselves, and must be as continually checked.

But if we have the leper's disease, we have also the leper's cure. Christ, the healer of mankind, is still really, though invisibly, present to heal our diseases and strengthen our infirmities. By the assistance of His Spirit, and the healing of His grace, He now stretches out His "right hand" in answer to our prayers.

Only we must follow the leper's example:— First, we must be as sensible as he was of our misery, and as desirous to be released from it. We must approach Christ with extreme reverence, kneeling down before Him, and confessing our unworthiness. We must strictly

use the means appointed for our cure; and then, putting our whole trust in Him, believe that "if He will, He can make us clean."* The cure of the Centurion's servant, which follows this account of the leper, is perhaps even more encouraging to those who see Christ by faith and not by sense. From it we learn that He is able to dispense His healing power by His word as well as by His touch; in His absence as well as when He is bodily present. Even to us who have been gathered "from the east and west"† does He now dispense the healing power of His grace, by means of His apostles and commissioned servants. But as to the sick man, so also to us is this blessing granted only according to our faith.‡ Only so far as by faith we see the precious Blood of Christ, cleansing us through sacraments and other outward means, do these outward means possess any healing efficacy.

In the lesson for this morning we listen to the gracious words of our Saviour Himself, offering us His healing gifts under the emblems of bodily food and refreshment. This water‖ signifies the cleansing of our souls in Holy Baptism; the wine here mentioned is the precious Blood of Christ, which strengthens and refreshes our souls in the Blessed Eucharist; the "milk" is His Word which is now preached to all, as many as are far and near. These are the means by which He now says to the penitent, "I will, be Thou clean." By them He strengthens our diseased souls, bringing forth in them the fruits of holiness and righteous-

* Gospel, verse 2; † verse 11; ‡ verse 13.
‖ Verse 1, &c.

ness; just as by the rain and the snow brought down from heaven He makes the earth to bring forth and bud.* These benefits are offered to all who rightly prepare their hearts to receive them; only to the slothful and slumbering, who wilfully give themselves up to the devouring enemy, are they denied.† Let us then examine our hearts by the light which God has made to shine in them, that we may discover the dangers and weaknesses which are most likely to befall us. Let us strive to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in His fear. God hath given us "in His house, and within His walls, a place and a name better than of sons and daughters."‡ If only we are sensible of our "dangers and necessities," there will He be ever present with us, "stretching out His right hand to help and defend us."‖

* Morn. Less. verse 10. † Even. Less. verses 9, 10, 11; ‡ verse 5. ‖ Collect.

Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany.

Epistle, Romans, xiii. 1. *Morning Lesson*, Isa. lvii.
Gospel, St. Matt. viii. 23. *Evening Lesson*, Isa. lviii.

We have seen how the light of God's grace preserves us from the dangers of our own hearts. To-day we learn how it can guide us safely in the dangers and troubles which surround us in the world.

Most of the troubles and confusion which disturb mankind have their origin in the disobedience and rebellion of man. His natural pride and self-will incline him to be disobedient and rebellious to the authority which is set over him, and so to disturb his own and his neighbour's peace. The first step towards promoting peace and concord in the world is, to teach men the principles of submission and obedience. These two virtues are amongst the first which the light of Christ's gospel brought into the world; and they are therefore those which the epistle for this day specially enforces upon the children of light.

We, Christians, are here taught to look upon our rulers as messengers sent from God to control and direct us, and to consider disobedience to them as disobedience to Him Who set them

over us.* And this is the difference between our submission and that of the heathens. They were subject for "wrath"—we for "conscience sake;"† their motive was a mere fear of man—ours springs from love and obedience to God.

This duty of loyalty or submission to the higher powers is one which is binding upon every Christian in every age and station of life. God has set over our country a sovereign, and laws to administer justice "for the punishment of evil doers, and for the praise of them that do well." The sovereign sends magistrates and rulers to maintain peace and discipline amongst those over whom they are appointed to rule. Over the Church, God has set pastors and teachers whom we are to "obey as those that have the rule over us." (Heb. xiii. 17.) Whosover, therefore, resisteth those powers, speaking lightly of their authority, or opposing their commands, "resisteth the ordinance of God."

Again, masters of families and parents are also amongst the higher powers, to which every soul placed under them is to be subject. Christian servants are commanded to serve their masters, not with eye service, as men pleasers, but as those that serve the Lord Christ; and children are to obey their parents, or their teachers to whom their parents entrust them, "because it is right and well-pleasing unto the Lord." It is the breaking of these laws, and resisting these ordinances, which causes schism in the Church, sedition in the state, discord and quarrelling in families. Those who do so can expect no strength or protection; while such as walk orderly, under the several autho-

* Epistle, verse 1; † verse 5.

rities which the providence of God has set over them, have nothing to fear. To them the minister of justice is a minister of good and not of evil, and should even he fail to protect them, the God Whom they serve is able to deliver them. Nevertheless, it sometimes happens that God suffers the rebellious passions of wicked men to triumph for a time, in order that through them He may train and discipline His faithful servants. This is signified to us in the gospel under the emblem of the ship at sea. The stormy sea represents the trouble and misery which the devil stirs up in the world; the ship is the Church, in which Christ is guiding His faithful people through the "waves of this troublesome world" to their everlasting rest. His being present with them, though asleep, shews how He watches over His faithful members, even while He "makes as though He heard them not."

In His good time, however, He manifests His divine power to still the raging tempest;* and so will He in His good time save His Church out of trouble, if its members have faith to persevere in earnest prayer. He Whose mighty power could drive out the evil spirits from the man possessed with the devils† will cure the evil passions of man's heart and reduce them to peace and order.

Thus do we find ourselves placed in that position which the collect of this day describes. We are "set in the midst of many and great dangers, against which the frailty of our nature could not stand," and so we pray that the divine grace and protection may "support us in

* Gospel, verse 26; † verse 32.

all dangers and carry us through all temptations."* That this divine strength will be granted in answer to our prayers, the lessons for this day, as well as the gospel, encourage us to hope. That for the morning opens with an assurance of God's watchfulness over His faithful servants; for rather than that they should fall under the dangers which surround them, often does He take them away from the evil to come.† The verses which follow contain the awful threats and curses of the Almighty against His chosen people for their wickedness and idolatry.‡ Now it is read as a warning to the Gentiles, by whom they have been succeeded; to those among us, who fall into the idolatry of self or of the world, being satisfied with "the life of their hand,"‖ that is, who mind the things of the flesh and not the things of the spirit, following after darkness and not after light.

Let us then "cast away these stumbling blocks" out of our hearts, and, "preparing the way"§ by penitence and humility, put our trust in the "High and Lofty One that inhabiteth eternity."¶ He came to bring peace to all contrite hearts;¶ and while the wicked are tossed about on the troubled sea** of their own unrestrained passions, He will bring the faithful and penitent to inherit His holy mountain.††

The evening lesson warns us against those sins and dangers into which the frailty of our nature is apt to lead even those who are striv-

* Collect. † Morn. Less. verse 1; ‡ verses 3–14; ‖ verse 10; § verse 14; ¶ verse 15; ** verse 20; †† verse 13.

ing to walk as children of light. Thus, even while "daily seeking God"* in His house, "delighting to know His ways,"* and exercising the duties of fasting and almsgiving,† there may lurk some secret sin or wrong motive which may render these things unacceptable in His sight. Self-examination must be continually trying our hearts, and the voice of conscience sounding like a trumpet‡ in our ears, to see that these things are not done with carelessness, or degenerating into indifference and formality; for, in such a case, they become worse than useless — even "sins and transgressions"‡ in the sight of God. Here, again, the light of God's grace will "break in"‖ upon us, and lead us out of danger, if we continually pray that "He will shew us the way of wickedness that is in us, and lead us in the way everlasting."

We learn then, on this day, that the children of light have to pass through this world as through the waves of a troubled sea; nevertheless, One is walking with them to save and defend them, even the Son of God. He knows better than we do the dangers in which we are set; "He has seen our ways, and will heal us."§ He is in the midst of us, therefore shall we not be removed; God shall help us, and that right early. "He will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able, but will with the temptation make a way to escape, that we may be able to bear it." (1 Cor. x. 13.)

* Verse 2; † verses 3–8; ‡ verse 1; ‖ verse 8; § Morn. Less. verse 18.

Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany.

Epistle, Col. iii. 12. *Morning Lesson*, Isa. lix.
Gospel, St. Matt. xiii. 24. *Evening Lesson*, Isa. lxiv.

In the midst of the troubles and dangers of the world, we have been taught to look for safety to the Church of Christ. Yet even here we must not rest too secure. In the safest vessel all may not be brought to land — out of the many who are called into Christ's Church militant on earth, all may not be chosen to live in His Church triumphant in heaven.

This is the thought conveyed to us in the services of this day. The gospel represents to us our Blessed Lord under the figure of a householder planting good seed in a field.* The field is the Kingdom or Church of Christ, which He has chosen out of the world to plant and cultivate. We, Christians, are the seed, whom at our baptism He planted into it, making us holy and good. The devil, who tries to corrupt us, is represented by the enemy sowing tares.† He is continually planting sin and wickedness amongst us, both in the world and in the hearts of men; making us to fall away from the holiness we once received from God;

* Gospel, verse 24; † verse 25.

and so it is that many Christians, who have been once illuminated by the heavenly gifts of God's grace, become like tares in a field of good wheat, dead branches of a living vine, unprofitable members of a holy Church. All, however, are allowed to grow together until the time of the harvest.* God allows His faithful and unfaithful servants to live together in the world and in the Church, thus proving and training the former, and giving to the latter a longer space for repentance. But, after seed-time comes the harvest, and after this life comes the judgment. At the time of harvest the tares are gathered into bundles to be burned, while the wheat is gathered into the barn.* So shall it be at the end of the world. God hath appointed a day in which He shall judge the world in righteousness. He Who now manifests Himself in mercy, shall then manifest Himself in terror, taking vengeance on them that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, and making the righteous to "shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father."† The same subject is again brought before us in the lessons for the day. In the first part of that for the morning, the state of the Church on earth is described. Our Lord, speaking by His prophet, here gives the true cause of the mixture of good and evil which surrounds us in the world. Not to any want of power or mercy on the part of God, but to the sinfulness of man is it to be ascribed — "The Lord's hand is not shortened that it cannot save, nor His ear heavy that it cannot hear;‡

* Gospel, verse 30; † verse 43. ‡ Morn. Less. verse 1.

but our iniquities have separated between us and our God." Sin it is which, like a cloud, first intercepts the light of God's grace in the soul of man; when he loses this divine help, he becomes indifferent to religion, careless and remiss in what is right, neither "calling for justice, nor pleading for truth."* Growing bolder in sin, he forsakes entirely the guidance of God's providence, and trusts "to vanity"* and the things of this world; and so it is that a very few steps will lead men, nations, and Churches into "works and thoughts of iniquity."† While waiting for light they behold obscurity; and in the midst of brightness they walk in darkness.‡ Such a state befell the Jewish Church: and such a state might also have befallen us, had not God provided an Intercessor, "Whose arm brings salvation to us, and Whose righteousness sustains us."‖ To Him, therefore, the second part of this chapter raises our thoughts. He is the defence of every faithful Christian who comes to Him for succour.§ If with one accord we fight manfully under His banner, the enemy shall not be able to destroy us, for the "Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him."¶ In the evening lesson, the Jewish Church is praying for the manifestation of this Blessed Redeemer, as the great and only hope of deliverance.** We, who are enjoying the light and privileges of His first manifestation, now look to His second and more glorious epiphany as the time of our final deliverance. For that glorious epiphany the Church is now preparing

* Morn. Less. ver. 4; † verses 6, 7; ‡ ver. 9; ‖ ver. 16; § verse 17; ¶ verse 19. ** Even. Less. verses 1, 2.

us. Warned by the example of the Jewish nation, who made so light of their privileges, and met with so grievous a fall, Christians are now called upon to take heed unto the light that is in them, so that that great day may not come upon them unawares; for only in proportion as we make a good use of the light of God's grace shall we be able to stand in the full blaze of the light of His glory. Christ is now manifesting Himself to us, "meeting us in our way rejoicing,"* and guiding us into the paths of righteousness; but how often do our iniquities lead us astray, and how frequently do Christ's people now sin against Him by forgetting His Name† and neglecting His holy house?‡ That such may not be the case with the Christian Church, let each one of us, her members, heartily enter into the prayer of penitence offered up in this lesson, as well as in the petition contained in the collect for this day. "Leaning upon the hope of God's heavenly grace," let each one of us not only pray that God's Church and household may be kept continually in His true religion,‖ but ourselves also strive to walk as worthy members of that household.

Let us continually aim at the practice of those virtues which the epistle lays down as marks of Christ's living members. Let us wait for the coming of our Lord, by living in mutual love and charity,§ making God's will the rule of all we do, and having a regard to God's glory in all our actions.¶ So only may we hope to escape the unquenchable

* Even. Less. verse 5; † verse 7; ‡ verse 11.
‖ Collect. § Epistle, verses 12–15; ¶ verse 17.

fire which shall one day burn up the unprofitable tares of God's household.*

Thus in the midst of this season of light and gladness does the Church leave with us a word of warning. Having called us to rejoice in the light which Christ brought into the world, she now bids us take heed that the light that is in us be not darkness; only so long as we walk in the light does the Blood of Jesus Christ cleanse us from all sin. (See 1 St. John, i. 7.) If, when light is come into the world, we still love darkness rather than light, great shall be our condemnation. (See St. John, iii. 19.)

* Gospel, verse 30.

Sixth Sunday after the Epiphany.

Epistle, 1 St. John, iii. 1. *Morning Lesson*, Isa. lxv.
Gospel, St. Matt. xxiv. 23. *Evening Lesson*, Isa. lxvi.

Last Sunday the great and final manifestation of the Son of God was brought before us with words of warning; to-day we speak of it with words of the most joyful hope. Then we learnt how diligent the enemy is in seeking to destroy our souls; to-day we are taught how gracious the Son of God has been in coming to destroy his works.

This being the last Sunday of the season, the services dwell on the two great epiphanies of our Lord, and show how His first manifestation in the flesh, which we have been now commemorating, is to prepare us for His second appearing in glory.

In the epistle, St. John speaks of the happiness which shall be brought to all glorified spirits at this second and glorious appearing. It will consist in being like God,* and seeing Him as He is.

What the full meaning of these wonderful expressions is we cannot yet understand; for "the natural man receiveth not the things of

* Epistle, verse 2.

the Spirit of God," and "eye hath not seen nor ear heard the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." It is God's will that we should walk by faith, and not by sight. So far, however, we learn from Holy Scripture, that by changing our vile body that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious Body, "Christ will make us like unto Himself." (Phil. iii. 21.) Christians, who are now united to Him through the Spirit, shall then rise again, and ascend into heaven with a human though glorified body, of the same nature as that with which their Lord rose again and ascended. A change will pass upon their persons, tempers, and inclinations. They shall be free from all the frailties and infirmities and earthly thoughts which have distressed them through life. Delighting in nothing but to do God's will, they shall know neither sin nor sorrow more, but shall be "as the angels of God in heaven." That in this blessed and glorified state, we shall have the awful privilege of "seeing God as He is," we know from the words of our Blessed Saviour Himself. He has told us that "life eternal consists in knowing God." (St. John, xvii. 3.) He prayed for us that we might be with Him where He is, and behold His glory, (verse 24;) and He has promised to the pure in heart that "they shall see God." (St. Matthew, v. 8.)

Into the possession of these heavenly promises does the second manifestation of our Lord admit us. His first manifestation trains us for the enjoyment of them. Thus, by having appeared to "put away our sins,"* and "purify us unto Himself," He hath prepared us to see God.

* Epistle, verse 5.

By making us now "sons of God,"* He hath planted in us that holiness and purity by which He will make us "like unto Himself"† hereafter; and by "destroying the works"‡ of the devil, He hath given us power to conquer those evil passions which would shut us out from the divine presence.

Such is the glorious state to which we look forward, and such the help we have towards attaining it. It remains with us to take heed that we lose not the prize of our high calling.

If, then, we would be admitted into the place where there shall "in no wise enter anything that defileth," surely our work on earth must be to "purify ourselves," even as our Saviour Christ is "pure."‖ We must continually guard and keep that soul which He hath cleansed and prepared for Himself, warding off the sins which are most likely to defile it; or, if we are unfortunately overtaken by them, never must we cease our penitential prayers until He has "washed us throughly from our wickedness and cleansed us from our sin." It is by thus "purifying ourselves as He is pure," that we shall be prepared for that last awful manifestation, which forms the subject of the gospel and proper lessons for this day. What is here written has been once partly fulfilled at the destruction of Jerusalem, and will again be accomplished at the last day. It is, therefore, "a thing established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass." Though many "false Christs and false prophets"§ will first appear, yet a time will come when Christ Himself shall

* Epistle, verse 1; † verse 2; ‡ verse 8;
‖ verse 3. § Gospel, verse 24.

be manifested in the clouds of heaven to gather together His elect from the four winds.* Those among the Gentiles who have profited by the gracious call made to them in the lessons, shall then be admitted into the "new heavens and new earth,"† wherein dwelleth righteousness. Those who have here by faith gathered round the Body of their Crucified Lord,‡ trusting in His merits, and strengthened by His grace, shall then be found where their Saviour is, and appear with Him in glory; and all who have been "abiding in Him," walking in His light, and "purifying themselves as He is pure," shall then "have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming." (1 St. John, ii. 28.)

Thus, during the season of this Epiphany, has the Sun of Righteousness been gradually manifested to us, shining more and more unto the perfect day;—first, as a guiding star, showing us our duty, and teaching us how to perform it;‖ then pointing out our dangers, and teaching us how to avoid them;§ and now, finally, does He lead us through the terrors of His last awful manifestation, to the contemplation of that blessed place, where there shall be "no more need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it;" for "the glory of the Lord shall lighten it, and the Lamb shall be the light thereof." (Rev. xxi. 23.)

* Gospel, verse 31.
† Morn. Less. verse 17, and Even. Less. verse 22.
‡ Gospel, verse 28.
‖ See Services for the Epiphany, and 1st and 2nd Sundays after the Epiphany.
§ 3rd and 4th Sundays after the Epiphany.

Septuagesima Sunday.

Epistle, 1 Cor. ix. 24. *Morning Lesson*, Genesis, i.
Gospel, St. Matt. xx. 1. *Evening Lesson*, Genesis, ii.

On Septuagesima Sunday we turn from the coming and manifestation of our Blessed Redeemer, to the thought of our sins which were the cause of His coming; therefore do we change the voice of praise and thanksgiving for that of penitence and sorrow. This was the day on which some of the early Christians were accustomed to begin their Lent, and it is the day on which Christians now begin to prepare for its approach. Forty days was the time originally assigned by the Church for the exercise of penitential sorrow and fasting; and the season of Lent was appointed to begin forty-six days before Easter, in order that the intervening six Sundays might be kept as festivals without diminishing the forty days fast. The first Sunday in Lent, being the Sunday nearest to the fortieth day, was therefore called the Sunday in the Quadragesima, or Quadragesima Sunday, that being the Latin word for forty. In the days of the Church's severer discipline, those who could not fast so long successively were allowed to begin their Lent at earlier

periods, so that besides the Sundays they might have other days for refreshment. Thus Quinquagesima, Sexagesima, and Septuagesima Sundays, (so called from being the Sundays nearest to the fiftieth, sixtieth, and seventieth days before Easter, as Quadragesima is to the fortieth,) were to some the beginning of Lent, though their actual time of fasting lasted only forty days.

Now, we all with one accord begin our Lent on Ash-Wednesday, which is forty-six days before Easter; but the names of these Sundays, and their penitential teaching, are still retained, to recall us to that spirit of contrition and self-discipline with which the holy season of Lent ought always to be approached.

The lessons for this day take us back to the time when man was created in innocence and holiness, and everything around him was "very good."* By choosing this time to place before us the high dignity from which we are fallen, the Church would make us sensible of the evil of sin which caused us to fall.

Penitence and humble prayer, offered up with full trust in the mercy of Jesus Christ, are the first steps towards renewing this our fallen nature, and to these the collect leads us. From this prayer we learn the different degrees by which sinful and repentant creatures are restored to the Divine love and favour. A thorough conviction of our own unworthiness and justly deserved punishment, must be our first step towards becoming fit objects for the mercy of God. When once the Almighty vouchsafes to look upon us "mercifully,"† then may we hope

* Morn. Less. † Collect.

that His "goodness"* will be exerted towards us, to deliver us from our offences, and to free us from the punishment they deserve; and so it is that fallen, though penitent Christians, who have been created for God's glory,† and regenerated for His service, may still be renewed in the image of Him that created them, through the merits of their Saviour and the assistance of His Spirit.

Repentance, however, is not an idle feeling, but a work, and a work which, through the mercy of God, we need never think it too late to begin. The parable in the gospel teaches us this. The labourers in the vineyard represent those whom God calls into His Church to work out their salvation with fear and trembling. Into this vineyard the Heavenly Householder receives us how and when He will, some early, some late, according to His good pleasure. The Jews, like those hired at the third hour,‡ were called in the earlier ages of the world, while the Gentiles were not admitted until a later period. So, also, is it with individuals. Some begin their work at the third hour,‡ that is, at the time of their baptism, and go on steadily until the evening of their lives. To these the daily work of repentance and self-examination is comparatively light and easy. Some, however, who have either not been called, or have not heeded the first or second call, may still, by the mercy of God, be saved even at the eleventh hour; but may we not suppose their repentance to be so much the more difficult and painful, as they have a shorter time in which to perform

* Collect. † See Collect, see also Psalm cxlv. 11.
‡ Gospel, verse 3.

their work? They may not, indeed, like the others, have to bear the "burden and heat"* of daily discipline, but the remorse and uncertainty which they bring upon themselves is far more painful than the light and easy yoke which they have rejected. While, therefore, we admire the goodness of Almighty God towards those who, perhaps, have not had opportunities and privileges equal to our own, let us see that we learn the lesson which the Church would convey to us this day.

We, who were early admitted into the vineyard, are once again called upon to return from whence we have strayed, and to redouble our diligence in the service of our heavenly Master.

To quicken us in the service, the epistle compares our Christian life to a race.† By this figure, St. Paul would teach us something of the activity, and zeal, and self-denial, with which Christians should strive for their heavenly crown. The Corinthians, to whom he writes, spared no pains in striving for an earthly prize. They would exercise themselves in a long course of self-discipline to bring their bodies into a fit state for the trial; and so we Christians, who have to run with patience the heavenly race that is set before us, may learn from their example. We should then, like them, be continually exercising restraint over ourselves,‡ our appetites and passions, keeping our bodies, souls, and spirits, in a fit state for God's service, and each striving with as much diligence as if one only could receive the crown.‖ Especially, we should avail ourselves of the

* Gospel, verse 12. † Epistle, verse 24;
‡ verse 25, &c.; ‖ verse 24.

holy season which is now approaching, to gain a greater increase of self-mastery,—we should consider what are the besetting sins which most entangle us in our Christian course, what self-indulgence is most dangerous to us, and how we may best exercise self-restraint and self-denial, so as to subdue the flesh to the spirit. So shall we be ready to profit by this opportunity of improvement which is soon to be held out to us.

Thus does the Church begin to prepare us for the holy season of Lent. She sets before us the goodness and long-suffering of God, which calls us to repentance.* She exhorts us not to despise the riches of His grace, but so to turn and judge ourselves, that we be not judged of the Lord. She bids us "run with patience the race that is set before us,"† and so "subdue and mortify the flesh," that "our spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." (1 Cor. v. 5.)

* Gospel. † Epistle.

Sexagesima Sunday.

Epistle, 2 Cor. xi. 19. *Morning Lesson*, Genesis, iii.
Gospel, St. Luke, viii. 4. *Evening Lesson*, Genesis, vi.

In order to humble ourselves rightly for sin, we must know something of its nature, its dangers, and its cure.

This, then, is what the Church would teach us to-day. Having called us to repent of our sins, she now shows us what sin is, and who is the author of it;* how our Redeemer has overcome it, and how He enables us to overcome it also. The account of the temptation of our first parents, their sin and fall, is therefore selected for our morning lesson.

From this chapter we learn to trace the source of all our misery to that chief of wicked rebellious spirits, the devil. Taking the form of a serpent, we read how he tempted Eve to doubt God's word; finding that she allowed herself to listen to his suggestions, the tempter easily persuaded her to distrust His goodness also†—thus destroying at once her faith and love. Without these safeguards to control and regulate her senses, she soon gave way to their inclination; and so was committed that first

* Morn. Less.; † verse 5.

act of disobedience, which brought sin into the world, and death through sin.

Thus, through the fall of our first parents, did man lose the image of his Maker. His body, from being immortal and heavenly, became vile and earthly; his soul, which had been pure and holy, became dead in trespasses and sins; and his will, which had been entirely conformed to the Divine will, became henceforth subject to the influence and control of the evil one. But God, in His mercy, did not leave us without hope. Even in the midst of the curses uttered in the garden of Eden, a Redeemer was promised,* Who should restore to fallen man the image he had lost. Through faith in this promised Redeemer, the heirs of the promises had power to be regenerated and restored; for those who were admitted into the patriarchal and Mosaic covenants, by faith looked forward to Him, as we by faith look back. And so has there ever existed a holy society, or Church, to guide and direct the children of Adam in the recovery of their lost privileges.

We, however, of the Christian covenant are admitted into a closer union with Him Whom the others saw but as "through a glass darkly." Cleansed and purified by the waters of baptism, our souls have been made "temples of the Holy Ghost," and our bodies will rise again from the tomb glorious and immortal; so that, by the mercy of God, we may regain in Christ, the second Adam, even more than we lost in the first. Yet is it not regained without continual struggling and constant danger. Still does our

* Morn. Less. verse 15.

fallen nature cling about us, and still does the devil strive to tempt those whom he once overcame. As children of fallen Adam, therefore, we are open to his attacks, though as members of a risen Saviour, we have strength to resist them. Of the awful power of Satan in the world, and of his influence over the hearts of men, the remainder of the services gives us abundant proof.

In the evening lesson we see how soon he led men on from the first act of disobedience to the lowest depths of sin and wickedness.* Even the "sons of God,"† that is, those who had been taken into covenant with their Maker, fell into the evil practices of the wicked world with which they associated; and all mankind became so depraved, that nothing less than the judgment of a flood could satisfy the justice of Almighty God. Warned by their example, the Church would admonish us at this time, that "except we repent, we shall all likewise perish."

And as in the world, so also in the hearts of men does the devil carry on his wicked work. This is represented to us by a parable in the gospel for the day.

God sows in our hearts the seed of eternal life, just as the sower puts seed into the ground.‡ From this seed He expects that we should bring forth fruit, each in different measure, according to our abilities. It is the devil's object to destroy this seed before it is grown up, and so to prevent the good work which God would carry on in our souls. Thus he suits his attacks according to our various characters and

* Verse 5; † verse 2. ‡ Gospel, verse 5.

circumstances. If he sees that we are slothful aud careless, taking no pains to understand what we read or hear, immediately he catches out of our hearts the word of salvation.* If, however, we do receive the word, but without gaining from it any fixed principle to act upon, he soon raises up such a temptation as will cause us to fall.† Again, in those whose hearts are divided between God and mammon, he works by means of the cares and riches and pleasures of this life, making them take such entire possession of the heart, as to choke the good seed and holy thoughts which are springing up.‡ Only by watchfulness and prayer, with patience and perseverance, can we hope to resist the attacks of the enemy, and to bring forth fruit in proportion to our privileges. Of these virtues, St. Paul in the epistle sets us a bright example.‖ He here lays before us the hardships and discipline which he had to undergo as a faithful member of Christ. And this he does not as claiming any merit of his own, but only to impress upon his hearers what self-denial and devotion is required of those who would overcome the world and lead in triumph their own passions.

Encouraged by his example, we should learn to submit patiently to any discipline which God may see fit to put upon us, either by the trials of His providence, or by the holy exercises of repentance, to which His Church is now calling us. They are ordered in mercy, as the best means to preserve us from temptation and deliver us from evil.

* Gospel, verse 12; † verse 13; ‡ verse 14.
‖ Epistle, verses 19–28.

May we then, each according to our different circumstances and characters, profit by this blessed opportunity to gain a victory over the attacks of the evil one. By prayer and self-examination let us discover in what particular point he has the greatest hold over us, and in that particular point let us increase in watchfulness and care.

The deep sense of our own frailty which these exercises must awaken in us, will lead us to acknowledge, in the words of the collect, that "we put not our trust in anything that we do; and to rejoice that there is One able and willing to deliver us from all adversity." He has overcome for us, that He might overcome in us. He came to bruise the serpent's head,* and He will "recover out of the snares of the devil, those who have been taken captive by him at his will." (2 Tim. ii. 26.)

* Morn. Less.

Quinquagesima Sunday.

Epistle, 1 Cor. xiii. 1.
Gospel, St. Luke, xviii. 31.
Morning Lesson, Genesis, ix. 1–20.
Evening Lesson, Gen. xii.

REPENTANCE, to be real, must be known by its fruits. This is the truth which the Church would impress upon us to-day. By choosing "charity,"* as the subject with which to close her preparation for Lent, she would remind us that all the exercises of that holy season are "nothing worth,"† unless the love of God be their motive and their end.

Charity, or the love of God, and our neighbour for His sake, is then the fruit which God expects of His penitent and faithful people.

This temper of mind, which Holy Scripture calls by the name of charity, is therefore described and explained to us in the epistle for the day.

From what St. Paul here tells us, we learn that charity is produced by the love of God, influencing our outward actions. He shows us that the same actions, which without this love profit us nothing, with it make up the Christian rule of charity. Thus we may possess the knowledge of God; we may practise self-denial,

* Collect and Epistle. † Collect.

and even alms-giving,* without possessing true charity. These are but a part of the duty, not the whole of it, and may have worldly objects for their end and view; but the holy disposition, which St. Paul calls charity, is of a far higher character. Having the love of God for its motive, and the good of man for its end, it regulates the inward disposition as well as the outward conduct. Those who possess it are "kind"† to their brethren, out of love to Him Who is their common Father and their common Saviour. They give to the needy for the sake of Him Who hath said that He will count such gifts as offered unto Himself. Considering His long-suffering unto themselves, they "suffer long"† with those who have wronged them. The sense of their own sinfulness also makes them humble towards their brethren. "Esteeming others better than themselves," and feeling that they have more than either they desire or deserve, they cannot "envy"† those whose lot is better than their own; and thinking thus lowly of themselves, they will not "easily be provoked"‡ to "think evil"‡ of others. Again, regard for God's glory makes them grieve over iniquity, and rejoice in the truth,‖ from wheresoever and from whomsoever it may proceed. Faith in God's Word, and hope in His promises, leads them to "bear all things"§ that may be put upon them; even rejoicing, if they are counted worthy to suffer for His Name.

This is the blessed temper which forms the happiness of the saints in heaven; therefore

* Epistle, verses 2, 3; † verse 4; ‡ verse 5; ‖ verse 6; § verse 7.

does God train and discipline us in it here, that we may be fitted for the enjoyment of it hereafter. In this life we can exercise it only by the help of faith and hope.* We see only as through a glass darkly, and are like children learning that which they cannot yet understand or enjoy. In heaven faith will be turned into sight, and hope into enjoyment; but the charity which it should be our aim to cultivate on earth, will there be still our employment and delight. Therefore it is, that while faith, hope, and charity, united, make up the Christian's life, the "greatest of these" is said to be charity.

To train us in the attainment of this heavenly temper, the holy season of Lent is an especial means. We are now called upon to mortify self, that we may glorify God, and to deny ourselves that we may give to others; while at the same time we are taught that all our self-denials will be worse than useless, if they should lead us to think the better of ourselves or the worse of our neighbours.

The exercise of this divine temper is, however, far above the strength of fallen man. It is reckoned in Scripture as the first fruits of the Spirit, (Gal. v. 22,) — the chief of those signs by which we may know whether we are counted living† or dead before God. It is, therefore the work of the Spirit, and must be prayed for in the collect as His especial gift. To keep alive this love of God in our hearts, the thought of His love to us must be the subject of our constant meditation. "We love Him because He first loved us," (1 St. John,

* Gospel, verse 13. † Collect.

iv. 19,) and we "walk in love" (Eph. v. 2) with our brethren, "even as Christ also hath loved us, and given Himself for us."

To the remembrance of His wondrous love and passion, therefore, does the remainder of the services turn our thoughts. The covenant of mercy through the merits of our Redeemer, which was renewed first to Noah,* and then to Abraham,† is a preparation for the closer contemplation of His sufferings in the gospel for to-day. Here do we behold our divine Saviour, the "brightness of His Father's glory, and the express image of His Person," going to suffer pain, reproach, and shame, for our sakes.‡ Knowing all things that should come upon Him, He voluntarily gives Himself up to be "wounded for our iniquities, and bruised for our sin," in order that "by His stripes we" might be "healed."

When we have thought and dwelt upon this unspeakable mercy, surely we can consider nothing too grievous to suffer for His sake, or too difficult to do in obedience to Him. We shall only wonder that the Lord our God has "bid us do no greater thing" than to "love Him with all our hearts and our neighbours as ourselves." Like Abraham, we shall be ready to go out into the heavenly Canaan whither He is leading us,‖ following Him through evil report and good report, until we come to the city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God; and, like Noah, we shall gladly conform to any rules of abstinence or restraint which are to keep alive the remembrance of a Crucified

* Morn. Less. † Even. Less. ‡ Gospel, verses 32, 33.
‖ Even. Less. verse 1.

Saviour.* But in the midst of the high aims and holy resolutions which this season especially calls forth, the history of the blind man in the gospel leads us back to the spirit of penitence and humility in which they should be undertaken. Feeling ourselves to be poor and miserable, and blind and naked, we now come to Him, crying, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us."† He commands us to be called.‡ It is His will that we should follow Him, and glorify God. When we are brought near to Him through penitence and devotion, He heals our blindness, He strengthens our weakness, and gives us grace to follow Him in the way.

* Even. Less. verse 4. † Gospel, verse 39; ‡ verse 40.

Ash Wednesday.

For the Epistle, Joel, ii. 12. *(Commination Service.)*
Gospel, St. Matt. iv. 1. *Proper Psalms*, vi., xxxii., xxxviii., ci., cxxx., cxliii.

THE cry of the Church on this day is that of the blind man: "Jesus, Master, have mercy on me!" To-day all Christ's people kneel before Him for pardon, turning to Him in weeping, fasting, and prayer. "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God," therefore, all have need of repentance; some more, some less, according to their different degrees of sin. Some few there may be who have never gone back from the holy state in which their baptism placed them; but even to these there clings such a remnant of their fallen nature as would soil the brightness of their baptismal purity, were they not continually washed and cleansed by repentance. Others, who have never quite lost their baptismal grace, have yet grieved the Holy Spirit by their continual negligences and ignorances, and constant failings; these have need of a stricter discipline and severer penitence; while those who have fallen into grievous and wilful sin, must undergo many "great and bitter cries" before they can be restored to the love and favour of God.

For all these classes of penitents the Church

has provided an effectual assistance in the institution of the holy season of Lent. The observance of the Lent, or spring fast, is of very ancient date. We know from the writings of those who lived nearly at the same time as the apostles, that a season of fasting always preceded the Commemoration of our Blessed Lord's Passion. Afterwards, the length of this fast came to be fixed at forty days, in remembrance of His fasting in the wilderness. This, then, is the forty days' fast which we still observe, and of which Ash Wednesday is the first day. During this season Christians are required to withdraw from outward things as much as their daily tasks will allow, in order to give themselves up to meditation, and fasting, and prayer. Fasting is a duty commanded by our Blessed Lord Himself, and is therefore binding upon all His members. Entire fasting during the whole forty days is not of course within human power, but the duty of fasting as far as our different constitutions will admit, is certainly intended to form a part of the exercises of this holy season, and is an especial help to our spiritual advancement. By denying our bodies their accustomed food, we show our sense of our own sinfulness, and of our utter unworthiness to partake of God's good creatures; we put down our selfish appetites, and we gain such a victory over the flesh as will bring us so much the nearer to communing with God in the spirit. Some, however, there are, who, from health or other circumstances, are not allowed this privilege of fasting. Such persons may yet observe the holy season of Lent by the practice of continual abstinence or restraint. By ab-

staining from pleasant food they may shew their sorrow for sin, and their desire for self-mortification; they may forego some selfish gratification in order to have the more to offer to Christ and His poor, or some portion of their time, which they had been accustomed to consider their own, they may spend in the service of God. Abstinence from sin being the great object of this holy season, any means by which we triumph over our sinful nature will prove both useful and profitable to us.

Ash Wednesday, or the first day of Lent, has always been observed with peculiar strictness. Its name comes from a custom which prevailed amongst the early Christians, of sprinkling ashes upon their heads, or lying in sackcloth and ashes, to show their sorrow and contrition. On this day all grievous sinners were excluded from the Church, only to be restored again to their privileges after a long course of penitence and trial. Now this custom is no longer practised, and all penitents of every degree are allowed to join the Church's general voice of penitential sorrow. Still, however, it is the wish of the Church that this custom should be restored, and until this can be the case, she has provided the use of a service which so comes home to the hearts of all men, as to awaken in the conscience of each a sense of his own particular guilt. Such a service is the Commination,—or threatening of God's judgments against sinners.

The solemn preface with which this service opens explains to us its use and meaning. It shows that the Commination, like the ancient discipline, is intended to cure the guilty, and

warn the innocent. First, God's curses against sin are denounced, and all men are commanded to acknowledge their justice by a solemn "Amen." Thus does each one try himself by his own words. Those who have committed the crime will see the necessity of repentance and amendment in order to salvation; while those who have hitherto been kept from it will consider the paths that lead to it, that they may check the very first beginning of it in themselves. Then God's minister is directed to call us to repentance in words taken entirely from Holy Scripture.* By the awfulness and certainty of God's judgments here set before us, our resolutions against sin are strengthened, and our hopes confirmed by the promise of His mercy, through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Thus are we moved to godly sorrow, in order that we may be led on to true repentance; for repentance is to forsake sin as well as to be sorry for it; to do "the things which God says," as well as to cry unto Him, "Lord, Lord!" The life of the true penitent described at the end of this address is then to be our aim and object. By it we must search and try our ways, that we may know whether our sorrow is that which worketh repentance, or the sorrow of the world which worketh death. All who remember their continual sins of omission, as well as commission, will be ready to apply to themselves the contrite words of David's penitential Psalm.† After the Versicles, or short Litany, which follow this Psalm, the priest prays for absolution upon all those whose consciences feel

* Exhortation in the Commination Service.
† Psalm li.

the need of it. He then implores God's mercy upon them; and thus prepared, the people are allowed to open their own lips and plead their own pardon. If only their hearts go along with their words, they cannot but be fitted to receive the concluding blessing which the Church pronounces in the most holy name and words of God Himself.

The remainder of the services are framed in the same spirit, encouraging us to repentance, and teaching us how to repent. Thus, the opening of the collect expresses a full trust in God's mercy, showing us that as our Creator, He "hateth nothing that He hath made;" as our Redeemer, He forgives the sins of all them that are penitent; while from the latter part of the prayer we learn, that in order to true repentance, nothing less than a new and contrite heart is required. We must be turned and converted to God, hating the sins we once practised, and practising the holiness we once neglected, if we would hope to repent "worthily" of our sins and wickedness. Therefore do we first pray for new and contrite hearts before we venture to implore pardon and forgiveness. That this inward penitence should ever be accompanied by outward acts of fasting and humiliation, both the epistle and the gospel for the day unite to teach us.

In the portion of Scripture selected for the epistle, the prophet Joel is exhorting the people to a solemn fast.* He summons all of every age and degree to appear before the Lord; testifying their inward penitence by outward marks of contrite sorrow; the priests interced-

* Joel, ii. 12.

ing for the sins of the people, and the people turning to the Lord "with weeping, and with fasting, and with mourning." And to all congregations who in like manner are moved to true repentance, may we not hope that He will in like manner "return and repent, and leave a blessing behind Him?"

In the gospel we have our Saviour's own instructions as to the duty and manner of fasting. By cautioning us against hypocrisy He would teach us that outward fasting is acceptable to God only so far as it really proceeds from a broken and contrite heart; and so do His blessed words afford a lesson to all who are in any measure striving to enter upon the duties of this holy season. If in our poor attempts at fasting or abstinence we can discover any degree of self-satisfaction, any desire to be seen of men, anything short of simple devotion to God, we must beware lest we fall into the condemnation of those who in this life only have their reward.*

To help us in the devotional exercises of this day, six of David's penitential Psalms are appointed to be used in the usual order, the seventh having been reserved for the Commination service.

All these Psalms begin in a mournful strain, and end with hope and joyful trust. This is to teach that sorrow for sin must always precede peace and joy. The duties of Lent must go before the joys of Easter, and the troubles of this life must be passed before we arrive at a happy eternity. We must "sow in tears," before we can "reap in joy." (Psalm cxxxvi. 6.)

* Gospel, verse 16.

In the first part of the 6th Psalm the penitent is suffering under a fearful sense of the Divine vengeance. He pleads his own sorrow* and God's mercy† as his only hope of forgiveness; but after a firm resolution to break off with all iniquity,‡ he is enabled to express a firm and joyful hope in the assistance of a Divine Saviour.‖

In the 32nd Psalm, David proclaims the blessedness of those whose "unrighteousness is forgiven, and whose sin is covered." Remembering his own repentance, and God's consequent goodness to him,§ he wishes that all might follow his example, that they might also obtain a like benefit.¶ If then we turn to God now when He may be found, and take refuge in the place which He has provided for us to hide in,** He will "teach us in the way wherein we should go,"†† and finally put into our mouths the joyful words with which David ends this holy Psalm.‡‡

In the 38th Psalm, David is speaking of sin as of a deadly disease, which is to the soul what common diseases are to the body.‖‖ From it he prays to be delivered, imploring that God would chasten but not consume him. Oppressed by the weight of his sorrow and the strength of his sin, he trusts for support to the salvation which cometh of God only.§§ In reading this Psalm, we should remember that the sufferings here described have all been undergone for us by Him Who knew no sin; and may this thought increase our hatred of sin, and quicken our desires of amendment!

* Verses 2, 3; † verse 4; ‡ verse 8; ‖ verses 9, 10.
§ Verse 6; ¶ verse 7; ** verse 8; †† verse 9;
‡‡ verse 12. ‖‖ Verse 7; §§ verse 15.

The expressions in the 102nd and 103rd Psalms are those of an afflicted and contrite soul, mourning over sin, and putting its whole trust in the merits of a Divine Redeemer.

The 143rd Psalm, being the last of those called penitential, is intended to carry us on a step higher in our course of repentance. By uniting holy purposes for the future with sorrow for the past, it would lead us on to the great lesson which it is the object of this solemn day to teach us. Thus we first pray that God would not "enter into judgment"* with us, and then we seek His grace to do the thing that pleaseth Him.† We beg to be turned out of the paths of sin, and then we pray that we may be led forth into the land of righteousness.†

We have now been supplied with motives and exhortations to repent, as well as with words by which to express our penitence. May we have grace to make good use of these blessed helps! May this holy season find us turning to the Lord, not only by the outward afflictions of the body, but by the inward humbling of our souls before God. With "new and contrite hearts" may we "submit ourselves unto Him, and from henceforth walk in His ways."‡ The merciful Lord will "in no wise cast out" (St. John, vi. 37) those who so come to Him; for He "looks graciously upon them that are of a poor and contrite spirit, and that tremble at His word." (Isa. lxvi. 2.) He is gracious and merciful, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. (2 St. Peter, iii. 9.)

* Verse 2; † verse 10. ‡ Exhortation in Commination Service.

First Sunday in Lent.

Epistle, 2 Cor. vi. 1.
Gospel, St. Matt. iv. 1.
Morning Lesson, Genesis, xix. 1–30.
Evening Lesson, Gen. xxii.

THE Sundays in Lent are not fasts, for the Lord's Day can never be observed otherwise than with holy joy; yet, as they are intended to furnish us with meditations through the week, their services all speak to us of repentance and fasting.

The great design of Lent is to make us forsake sin and overcome temptation. Having lately seen how we were made subject to sin and temptation through the weakness of Adam, we are now to be taught how we may rise above it by the power of Christ. The temptation of our Blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ is therefore set before us as a fit subject for our meditation during Lent, and is especially brought before us in the services for this day.

The gospel gives us the details of this wonderful part of our Lord's history; and from the collect we learn that what He then underwent was endured "for our sakes." That He might comfort us by His sympathy, and instruct us by His example, our Blessed Redeemer condescended for a time to lay aside His divine

power, and be "in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." (Heb. iv. 15.) He Himself also "suffered being tempted, that He might be able also to succour them that are tempted." (Heb. ii. 18.) And thus has our divine Master not only conquered for us, but He has given to us, His members, grace to conquer with Him. By resisting the enemy in those very points in which he most assails us, our Saviour has taught us how we also may overcome his attacks. He struggled for us against the temptations of the world* and the flesh,† that when the devil works against us by these means, we may have His blessed example to observe and follow. Thus we read that the "lusts of the flesh" were the means by which the devil first began to tempt Christ our Lord. Taking occasion from the hunger of our Blessed Saviour, he endeavoured to persuade Him to work a miracle for the satisfying of His bodily appetite, and so to distrust the providence of God. In like manner does the evil one tempt us when we are over-careful for the things of this life, taking "anxious thought for what we shall eat, or what we shall drink, or wherewithal we shall be clothed;" "careful and troubled about many things" which must perish in the using, rather than about the one thing needful which can never be taken away from us. To resist such a temptation we must apply, as our Saviour did, to the Word of God. From it we shall learn "not to labour for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life." (St. John, vi. 27.)

From distrusting the providence of God, the

* Gospel, verse 8; † verse 3.

devil would lead our Lord to the opposite sin of presuming upon it. He would have Him tempt the Divine Providence by exposing Himself to unnecessary danger.* And do not we fall into the same snare when we think ourselves so high in the divine grace and favour as to neglect the duty of continual watchfulness and precaution? To such the Scripture would say, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." It is by spiritual presumption that we tempt the Lord our God.

Again was Satan allowed to make one more attack upon our Blessed Lord through the "lust of the eyes and the pride of life."† (See 1 St. John, ii. 16.) These are also the favourite instruments by which the devil seeks to devour the souls of men. Knowing our different tastes and characters, he sets before us the particular object which is most likely to tempt us, making it appear pleasant and good. To some he promises worldly honours and greatness, to others worldly praise or admiration, to all worldly ease and self-indulgence, if they will be his servants and commit sin. Here, again, the Word of God comes in for our instruction, teaching us to worship the Lord our God, and serve only Him, and asking what it would profit us were we to gain the whole world and lose our own souls?

We see, then, that as long as we are in the flesh the devil will use the works of the flesh to destroy in us the works of the Spirit; and that he must be resisted by the Word of God, by fasting and prayer.

Humbly endeavouring to follow the footsteps of our most Holy Lord, we must, in the words

* Gospel, verse 6; † verse 3.

of the collect, "use such abstinence" as will "subdue" or make obedient our flesh to the Spirit, and so leave to the devil a weaker hold over us. We must not however expect, that while engaged in the exercises of this holy season, he will flee from us altogether; on the contrary, we are sometimes the most tempted during seasons of abstinence and mortification; for as the devil tempted our Saviour while fasting in the wilderness, so he now tempts those whom he sees to be using most active measures against him. Fasting, and watching and prayer, do not take us out of temptation, but they give us strength to bear up against it; they procure for us increasing strength in proportion to the increasing temptation, according to the promise, that "as our days, so shall our strength be." (Deut. xxxiii. 25.)

Lest, however, we should think the example of our Blessed Lord too high and holy to aim at, the epistle turns our eyes to that of the apostles. It shows us how men of like passions with ourselves were able to overcome by the Blood of the Lamb, serving the Lord in stripes and imprisonments, in watchings, and fastings, and labours.* To the former of these we may never be called; yet the sufferings and self-denials of these holy men will be a profitable subject for our meditation at this time. It will make us feel how very far short we now come in the duties of abstinence and self-discipline, and quicken us to a more diligent performance of them. But there is also another reason why this epistle and gospel are selected for the service of this day. We are now entering

* Epistle, verse 4.

upon the Spring Ember week, when many amongst us are preparing to enter the sacred ministry of Christ by receiving holy orders. The Church, taking example from Him Who underwent forty days' fast before entering upon His ministry, appoints this time for remembering, with fasting and prayer, those who are about to undertake the sacred office. Our thoughts are, therefore, directed to the labours and fastings of the apostles, that, bearing in mind the labours and responsibilities of those who watch for our souls, we may be so much the more diligent in offering up prayers in their behalf.

The example of Abraham, in the evening lesson,* adds one more to the "cloud of witnesses" who are now teaching us to "lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, that we may run with patience the race that is set before us." From his self-denying obedience we learn how entire is the obedience and submission of those who have endeavoured to subdue themselves and bring their will in submission to the will of God. The terrible destruction of Sodom is set before us at this time as an awful warning to the impenitent and careless. "Pride and fulness of bread"—(see Ezekiel, xvi. 49)—*i.e.* self-indulgence and security, were the sins which caused the fall of Sodom; as they are now the cause of ruin to numbers, churches and nations as well as individuals.

It is to preserve us from so great a danger that the Church lifts up her warning voice this day. Reminding us that "now is the accepted

* Verse 3, &c.

time, now is the day of salvation,"* she would have us take heed that our hearts be not overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and so the great day come upon us unawares; therefore is she so diligent in exhorting us to overcome self, and lead in triumph our own passions.

Let us, then, each according to the rules prescribed for us, spend this holy season in so "subduing the flesh, as to obey in all things the godly motions of the Spirit;" for "if we live after the flesh, we shall die: but if we through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, we shall live." (Rom. viii. 13.)

* Epistle, verse 2.

Second Sunday in Lent.

Epistle, 1 Thess. iv. 1. *Morning Lesson*, Gen. xxvii.
Gospel, St. Matt. xv. 21. *Evening Lesson*, Gen. xxxiv.

In last Sunday's services we learnt something of the struggle which is ever going on between our bodies and our souls. We saw how the flesh is continually lusting against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; how the corruptible body is continually pressing down the soul, leading it away from holy things.

To keep the body in temperance, soberness, and chastity, a ready instrument in God's service, is therefore urged upon us this day, as the great duty of a Christian's life. It is enforced upon us in the epistle* by precept, in the lessons by warnings and examples; while the gospel and collect encourage us to make it the subject of our constant prayers.

St. Paul begins the portion of his epistle which we read to-day, by an exhortation so to walk as to "please God more and more;" and as one means of more effectually doing the divine will, he desires that we should "keep our vessel in sanctification and honour."† To understand this expression, we must remember

* Verses 3, 4, 7; † verse 4.

that by baptism our bodies were sanctified and made holy. The Holy Spirit Who then condescended to dwell in them has vouchsafed to call them temples or vessels for Himself. They are therefore to be kept as "vessels fit for the Master's use," (2 Tim. ii. 21,) ready and prepared for every good work. As a vessel, then, should be continually kept pure and clean, in order to be ready for service when called for, so must we be continually mortifying those "members upon earth" (Col. iii. 5) which might unfit us for the service of God. Remembering that God "hath called us not unto uncleanness, but unto holiness,"* we must "cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in His fear." Sloth, intemperance, vanity, and a love of ease and pleasure, are amongst those lusts of the flesh which, if suffered to grow up, might defile, and in time destroy the temple of God; and these must be continually subdued and kept in check, if we would present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God. (Rom. xii. 1.)

From the lessons we learn how fearful are the consequences of following the desires of the flesh, instead of being guided by the motions of God's Holy Spirit. For one morsel of meat, Esau had sold his birthright, (Gen. xxv. 32;) and now, when he would inherit the blessing, he is rejected;† even bitter cries and tears (see Heb. xii.) found no place to change the mind of Isaac, because his sorrow was that of a worldly-minded man; he regretted the earthly blessings he had lost more than the heavenly inheritance which he had forfeited. His "ex-

* Epistle, verse 7. † See Morn. Less.

ceeding great and bitter cry"* is a faint image of that despair which will one day seize those who have chosen to "enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season" rather than to wait for the glories of the eternal kingdom.

The example of Dinah is another warning against the unrestrained indulgence of our natural inclinations. Idle curiosity and love of pleasure led her to mix voluntarily with the idolatrous people of the land.† Having thus placed herself in unnecessary temptation, and thrown off the divine guidance, she fell into dangers which ended in her destruction. Had she, on the contrary, subdued and controlled her vain desires, she would not have brought disgrace upon herself, discord and bloodshed‡ into her family.

From these instances of a carnal mind we turn to one of an opposite character. The transaction of Jacob in this morning's lesson is one of those histories which Holy Scripture relates as an example to be imitated not in the act, but in the spirit which prompted it. Of course his deceit was very sinful, and it cost him afterwards many hard years of toil and sorrow; yet in him we see the example of a spiritually-minded man, who denies himself earthly meat in order to gain a heavenly blessing, and who leaves no means untried which may lead him to the attainment of God's promises. Thus he reminds us of those who "take the kingdom of heaven by force and with violence," and who use worldly things in such a way as to secure to themselves a place in the "celestial habitations." (St. Luke, xvi. 9.)

* Morn. Less. verse 34. † Even. Less. verse 1; ‡ verse 25.

Seeing, then, how our earthly nature, or what is called in Scripture "the flesh" and "the body," may become so powerful an instrument either for good or evil, we should use all the restraints of this holy season to bring it into subjection. If we have "yielded our members servants to iniquity," we must now yield them "servants of righteousness unto holiness;" we must restrain our eyes from wandering after vain objects, our ears from listening to that which is unprofitable or hurtful, our palate from intemperance and self-indulgence, and our tongue from idle words and evil speaking; so will our hands and feet be ready to do God's will, our whole body will be a living sacrifice unto Him. (Rom. xii. 1.) Yet, lest we should be trusting too much to our own efforts and watchfulness, the collect and gospel remind us "that we have no power of ourselves to help ourselves."

God deals with us in spiritual as in temporal things. He bids us use means for safety; the power to preserve us He keeps in His own hands.

Like her whose cure we read in the gospel,* we have an unclean spirit struggling within us, who will yield to nothing but to the mighty power of Christ. To Him, therefore, we must come, saying, "Lord, help me!" He may not at first seem to hear us; He may see fit to try our patience by not at once granting to our exercises of devotion the benefit we expect; still we must cry after Him, and our repentance and fasting and prayer will in time procure from Him a gracious answer. He will "keep us both outwardly in our bodies and

* Verse 22.

inwardly in our souls,"* preserving our bodies what He once made them, and intended they should be,—vessels fitted for God s mercy, and enabling us to glorify God in our body and our spirit, which are God's. (1 Cor. vi. 20.)

* Collect.

Third Sunday in Lent.

Epistle, Ephesians, v. 1. *Morning Lesson*, Gen. xxxix.
Gospel, St. Luke, xi. 14. *Evening Lesson*, Gen. xlii.

THE spiritual warfare in which we are engaged is a difficult and arduous one. Not only have we to fight against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against spiritual wickedness and works of darkness. The former we were taught to resist in the services of last Sunday; the latter are the enemies against which we are warned to-day.

Through this mighty struggle none can safely carry us but the mighty power of God, which we pray for in the collect under the figurative expression of the "defence of His right hand." But while the second part of the collect thus provides us with words to frame our petition, the first part reminds us how much its success will depend upon the state of our own hearts. Before we offer up this prayer we must, therefore, examine ourselves as to whether our "desires" are such as we can beseech Almighty God "mercifully to look upon." If our hearts are not whole with Him, our petition will be but an empty form of words; but if our struggles against sin are as

strong as the words in which we pray to be delivered from it, then may we hope that His "right hand will be stretched forth to defend us against all our enemies."*

Thus armed, we must go out to fight against those works of darkness† of which the epistle speaks. The devil, who is the prince of darkness, will be continually working in them and through them, to entice us into his wicked ways.

These then are the enemies which Christians overcome in the name of Him Who is fighting for them. At our baptism, when we were made sons of God and children of light, there was given to us "power and strength to have victory, and to triumph against the devil, the world, and the flesh." (Baptismal Service.)

It remains for us to use this power as we ought. If we would live as children and followers of God, we must "walk in love as Christ also loved us, and gave Himself for us;"‡ and, if we would continue children of light, we must avoid all fellowship with works of darkness. By this the apostle would teach us that it is not enough to abstain from gross and grievous sins; for into these we may never perhaps be tempted to fall. To be true "children of the light and of the day," we must avoid every approach to vice or crime. Remembering what we have been made, Whose we are, and Whom we serve, we must, as much as possible, avoid hearing and seeing evil things, or being unnecessarily in the company of those who practise them; while at the same time we should so regulate our own lives and conversations that

* Collect. † Epistle, verse 11; ‡ verse 2.

nothing corrupt may proceed out of our mouth, but that which is good and edifying.*

It is by thus letting our light shine before men, that we shall best "reprove the works of darkness:"† by thus "fighting in the name of the Lord," that we shall best repel the "enemies that compass us round about."

The gospel for the day gives us some idea of the power of the evil one, and of the manner in which he is allowed to use it. "As a strong man armed,"‡ he vigilantly keeps those whom he has once made his spoil, until Christ, "the stronger,"‖ rescues them from his grasp. When, by the purifying of baptism, or the after-training of discipline and penitential sorrow, Christ has driven out from us the evil spirit, then are we, like the chamber which was "empty, swept, and garnished;"§ ready and prepared for every good work, but open also to the attacks of the evil one. If we strive by prayer and watchfulness to keep the Holy Spirit in our hearts, then we may hope that he will dwell in us and abide with us for ever; but if we remain "unfurnished of good works," Satan will find ample room for exercising his evil purposes towards us.

Such is the warning with which the Church addresses us in the midst of this penitential season. By the help of Christ our Lord we have now been endeavouring to cast out the unclean spirit of sin and wickedness. We may perhaps have overcome him in one point, but let us not for that be off our guard; for, if he has been driven out in one quarter, he will

* Epistle, verses 4, 12; † verse 11.
‡ Gospel, verse 21; ‖ verse 22; § verse 25.

return in another; if he sees us less inclined to one sin he will take that very moment to beset us in another. And should he return and take possession when our Blessed Lord had enabled us to overcome him, our last error is indeed worse than the first;* "it had been better for us not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after we have known it, to turn again from the holy commandment which was delivered to us." (2 St. Peter, ii. 21.)

Joseph's case, in the morning lesson, brings before us a strong instance of the power of God's "right hand,"† when exerted to defend His faithful servants. It was because "God was with him,"‡ holding him in the right path, and leading him in the way wherein he should go, that his footsteps slipped not. In the moment of temptation, divine grace was present with him, and enabled him to say, "How shall I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"‖ The Lord did not suffer him to be tempted above that he was able; but with the temptation also made a way for him to escape that he was able to bear it.

But if the power of the Lord is thus strong to keep the feet of His saints, the "mighty finger of God" is also able to cast out the unclean spirit of hardness and impenitence. Thus the brethren of Joseph were brought to a sense of their sin by the over-ruling power of God's providence; so that he who had been the victim of their guilt became the instrument of their recovery. But as it was only after a long course of discipline that they were brought to

* Gospel, verse 26. † Collect.
‡ See Morn. Less. verse 2; ‖ verse 9.

acknowledge themselves "verily guilty concerning their brother,"* so does it usually require much chastening and many trials before men will be brought to confess their wickedness and be sorry for their sin.

Thus do the services of this day set before us our dangers and our safeguards. We look upon ourselves as compassed round about with enemies, yet able to destroy them in the name of the Lord.

If our desires are holy, and our struggles against sin sincere, He will defend us with the wholesome strength of His right hand, so that the enemy shall not be able to do us violence, nor the son of wickedness to hurt us. If we walk as children of light, having no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, God will drive out the evil spirit with His Word, and heal us; we shall be able to "resist the devil, and he will flee from us."

* Even. Less. verse 21.

Fourth Sunday in Lent.

Epistle, Galatians, iv. 21. *Morning Lesson*, Gen. xliii.
Gospel, St. John, vi. 1. *Evening Lesson*, Gen. xlv.

HITHERTO, in the services of this penitential season, the Church has been speaking to us of sin and of punishment; now, following in the footsteps of Him, Who in the midst of judgment remembers mercy, she would speak to us of mercy and of pardon. This is why the fourth Sunday in Lent, or mid-lent Sunday, is also called the Sunday of refreshment.

On this day, penitent sinners, who have been brought to a sense of their sins and of the punishment due to them, are comforted with the assurance that they shall be "relieved"* through the mercy of Jesus Christ our Lord.

The collect, therefore, prays for the comfort of His grace. The epistle shows how we are admitted to a share of those comforts through the gospel covenant; while the other portions of Scripture, selected for this day, represent our Lord Jesus Christ dispensing them to us in His own appointed way.

To explain to us the full extent of our privileges as members of the Christian covenant,

* Collect.

the apostle makes use of an allegory, or figure of speech.* The two wives of Abraham represent the two covenants of the law and the gospel. Hagar, the Egyptian, being a slave, is a fit emblem of the law which tied men down to the ceremonial observances of Moses. Her son is, therefore, a type of those ordinances in which men served God only as "having received the spirit of bondage to fear." (Rom. viii. 15.) But in Sarah, the free woman, we see an emblem of the Christian Church, whose children, having been released from this bondage, have received the spirit of adoption, and been admitted into the privileges of "sons of God."

Thus as it was with the type, so also was it with that which it represented.

When the son of the free woman was born, the son of the bond woman was cast out to make way for him.† When, in the fulness of time, Christ came to redeem His people, the ceremonial observances of the law were cast out to make way for the merciful terms of the gospel covenant. The law had been their schoolmaster to bring them to Christ; when Christ came, there was no more need of a schoolmaster; He Himself undertook to conduct them, through means and ordinances of His own appointment, to that heavenly Jerusalem above, which is the end and object of all our hopes.

So it is that from servants we became sons, and, if sons, then heirs of God through Christ; no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household

* Epistle, verses 23, 24; † verse 30.

and family of God; and, with the innumerable company of angels and spirits of just men made perfect, we hope to come to the city of the living God, the heavenly* "Jerusalem."

Such are the blessings with which our Blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ refreshes the penitent and faithful members of the Christian covenant. We have now to see how He dispenses them. Of this the portion of Old Testament history which we read to-day affords us a lively emblem. Joseph was in many ways a type of our Lord. His dealings towards his sinful brethren may therefore give us some idea of Christ's dealings with those sinful but repenting creatures whom He has been pleased to call His brethren.

First, Joseph tries his brethren by a long course of severe discipline (Gen. xlii. 30, &c.); so does the Lord chasten those whom He loves, and scourge those whom He receives. Joseph's brethren prove that they have come to a better mind, by their care for Benjamin (Gen. xliv. 30); by turning from their wicked ways, and amending their lives, sinners prove that they have truly repented of their wickedness and are sorry for their sin.

Joseph, seeing the sincerity of his brethren's change, invites them to come unto him;† so does Christ mercifully call unto Him all that labour and are heavy laden with the burden of sin.

Still the remembrance of past transgressions cannot all at once be blotted out. The brethren of Joseph are afraid to stand before the man, for their conscience makes them fearful and trembling;‡ only when they are repeatedly

* Epistle, ver. 26. † Morn. Less. ver. 16; ‡ verse 18.

urged by the steward of Joseph's house do they venture to sit at his table, and eat and drink in his presence; so are penitent sinners repeatedly invited and urged by the stewards of Christ's mysteries, before they venture to eat of His bread and drink of His cup.

Joseph, however, does not yet disclose himself to his brethren; they could not all at once bear the sight of him whom they have once so highly offended; no more could we, all at once, bear the sight of Him Whom we have crucified afresh and put to an open shame. Christ, therefore, looks upon us with mercy, and waits, that He may be gracious unto us, just as Joseph yearned towards his brethren;* but He does not yet open our eyes to behold His visible presence. He makes us to commune with Him by faith; leading us to Himself by prayer and holy communion here, that He may fit us for beholding Him with "open face" hereafter. Then when the day shall come when we shall see Him with our eyes, and His mouth shall speak with us,† (Rev. i. 8,) we shall be comforted as well as troubled at His presence. Though we shall come before Him with all our sins, yet we shall bring our repentance and pardon also. His death, in which we had a share, will by His wondrous mercy be made the means to preserve us unto everlasting life;‡ and He Who has refreshed and comforted us on earth will load us with the good things of His kingdom, and call us to the marriage supper of the Lamb in heaven.

From the type we turn to the reality, and in the gospel we behold our Blessed Lord and

* Morn. Less. verse 30. † Even. Less. verse 12; ‡ verse 5.

Saviour providing for the wants of His disciples, and distributing to them in their necessity.* As He provides for the bodies so does He also for the souls of men. He calls men to Him; and by the hands of His apostles and their commissioned successors, He strengthens and refreshes their fainting souls. We know not how by the use of small outward elements He sustains the vast multitude that call upon His Name, any more than they in this gospel knew how their bodies had been nourished and supported by such apparently scanty provisions. Only we must do as they did. Without questioning His power, we must come before Him in the order He has commanded,† and use the means He has prescribed, and we shall receive the benefit they experienced. As surely as our Lord sustained the natural lives of the fainting multitude, so surely will He "preserve our bodies and souls unto everlasting life."

We learn, then, that on this day our merciful Lord will in no wise cast out those who come to Him,—that "He satisfieth the empty soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness," (Psalm cvii. 9;) and that if we sincerely "hunger and thirst after righteousness, we shall be filled." (St. Matthew, v. 6.)

* Gospel, verse 11; † verse 10.

Fifth Sunday in Lent.

Epistle, Hebrews, ix. 11. *Morning Lesson*, Exodus, iii.
Gospel, St. John, viii. 46. *Evening Lesson*, Exodus, v.

THIS is called Passion Sunday; because from this day until Good Friday the Church turns our thoughts entirely to the death and passion of our Blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Having shewn us our sinfulness,* and refreshed us with the hope of His mercy,† she now points to the one great Sacrifice on which depend all our hopes of pardon, and promises of comfort.

To explain to us the merits of this Sacrifice, the epistle looks back to the sacrifices of the Jewish law. The Jewish law taught mankind that without shedding of blood there could be no remission. The Lamb of God had indeed been accepted as a sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world; but until He came, in the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ, to make good the sacrifice, His death was typified or represented by that of innocent animals.‡ Once every year, therefore, the high priest was commanded to enter the

* First three Sundays in Lent.
† Fourth Sunday in Lent. ‡ Epistle, verses 12, 13.

holy place with a bullock and a goat; the former to be offered for his own sins, the latter for the sins of the people. (Lev. xvi.) By these repeated acts of expiation the Jewish people were cleansed from their repeated sins and defilements, saved from temporal death, and allowed to commune with Almighty God in the service of the sanctuary. "But the law was only a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things." (Heb. x. 1.) What the Jewish priests and sacrifices did through types, Christ, the true Priest and true Sacrifice, did for us in reality.

Once for all He entered into the tabernacle of our flesh, that He might suffer and die for us; and He went once up into heaven, the true holy place,* that He might offer up His own Blood as an atonement, by which He saved us, not from temporal, but from eternal death, and procured for us the privilege not only of communing with God in an earthly sanctuary, but of dwelling with Him in a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. But from the latter part of this portion of Holy Scripture, we learn that He has thus purified us unto Himself, in order that we may be unto Him a peculiar people, zealous of good works;† through His Blood we are indeed purged from dead works, and through His death we are called to a heavenly inheritance; but having been so called, we must renounce those dead works, and serve the living God, if we would also receive the promise.

This is the great atonement which the Church on this day begins to commemorate. To-day we

* Epistle, verses 11, 12; † verse 14.

remember the first council (St. John, xi. 46, 47) which was held against our Blessed Lord, preparatory to His crucifixion; the gospel, therefore, presents Him to us as beginning to endure the contradiction of sinners against Himself.* He Who will have all men to come to the knowledge of truth, is here endeavouring to convince obstinate sinners of the truth of His divinity, that so they might believe and be saved; but they will not hear His words; they revile and reject Him, and take up stones to cast at Him.† Our Lord then leaves them, and hides Himself from them; and so does He deal with all those who reject the truth when it is made known to them. Though He may bear long with them, yet in the end He will hide Himself from them, and give them up to their impenitence and hardness of heart. By their unbelief they crucify the Son of God afresh, and so deprive themselves of the benefits of His passion. What should have been for their salvation becomes to them an offence and an occasion of falling.

It is to warn us against a like danger that the Church prepares us for celebrating our Blessed Lord's passion, by bringing before us the doctrine of His divinity. Let us then profit by her guidance. Let us ever, and especially at this holy season, approach the awful subject of our Lord's passion with a full belief in His Blessed Godhead. While we behold Him, a man of sorrows, despised and rejected of men, let us bear in mind that He Who suffered is both God and man, the great "I AM,"‡

* Gospel, verses 46, &c.; † verse 59;
‡ verse 58; also Morn. Less. verse 14.

Who was, and is, and is to come; so only shall we be prepared to enter into His mysterious sufferings, and to receive the full benefit of His atoning sacrifice. The redemption of the world from the tyranny of the devil and the bondage of sin, is typified to us by the redemption of Israel from the tyranny of Pharaoh and the bondage of Egypt. To this subject the Church from this day turns our thoughts. We read how God looked upon the affliction of His people,* how the same great Being, Whom the gospel speaks of under the title of "I AM," heard their cries by reason of their task-masters, and came down to deliver them.

So did He also deal with us.

Out of the heavens did the Lord behold the earth, that He might hear the mournings of such as are in captivity, and deliver the children appointed unto death. (Psalm cii. 19.) He wondered that there was no salvation, and it displeased Him that there was no intercessor, (Isa. lix. 16;) therefore His own arm brought salvation unto them, and His righteousness it sustained them. He sent His only begotten Son into the world, that through His death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. (Heb. ii. 14, 15.) Such, then, is the mighty Prophet and Deliverer of Whom Moses was only the type, (Deut. xviii. 15,) and such the mighty deliverance which He has at this time effected for us. He is the Redeemer Who humbled Himself to the death of the Cross for us sinners who lay in darkness and in the shadow

* Morn. Less. verse 7.

of death, that He might exalt us to everlasting life; we are now the "holy nation, the peculiar people," who have been appointed to show forth the praises of Him Who has thus called us out of darkness into His marvellous light.

To Him, therefore, we must look for mercy, pardon, and for peace; not murmuring against Him, like the rebellious Israelites,* but praying in the words of the collect, that He Who once so mercifully looked upon His people, will continue to "look mercifully" upon us, that by His great goodness we may be "governed and preserved evermore both in body and soul."†

* Morn. Less. verse 22. † Collect.

Sixth Sunday in Lent,

OR SUNDAY NEXT BEFORE EASTER, COMMONLY CALLED PALM SUNDAY.*

Epistle, Philippians, ii. 5. *Morning Lessons*, Exod. ix.; St. Matthew, xxvi.
Gospel, St. Matt. xxvii. 1. *Evening Lessons*, Exod. x.; Heb. v. 1–11.

To-day we enter upon the awfully solemn week of our Lord's Passion. No words of men are strong enough to express the reverential awe with which Christians should draw near to celebrate the holy passion-tide. God made Flesh suffers for the sins of man, and man, for whom He suffered, is contemplating His sufferings. God's own Word, therefore, is our best guide in approaching so great and awful a subject; to it, therefore, does the Church lead us.

Four times during this sacred season is the solemn narrative of our Lord's Passion read to us out of Holy Scripture; each evangelist in turn being brought forward to tell (as far as it is God's will that we should know) of all that our adorable Redeemer did and said and suffered, from His entry into Jerusalem until His

* From the branches of palms strown before our Lord, on the occasion of His solemn entry into Jerusalem.

death upon the Cross. But the Church does not leave us here: from contemplating His sufferings, she would make us to be "conformed" to them; and from meditating upon His Cross, she would lead us to bear it after Him. This is the heavenly teaching which is provided for us, and which it is our blessed privilege humbly and reverently to follow.

Let us then strive so to realize to ourselves the solemn scenes upon which our Lord is at this time entering, that the contemplation of them may be profitable to our soul's good.

On this day our Saviour makes His solemn entry into Jerusalem. Knowing all that should befall Him there, He voluntarily enters the city which was to be the scene of His sufferings. He voluntarily gives Himself up to the fickle multitude, knowing that, though to-day they call Him "king," to-morrow they will call Him "malefactor;" though to-day their cry is "hosanna," to-morrow it will be "crucify."

By this voluntary giving up of Himself, He proves Himself to be our Priest as well as our Sacrifice,—our full, perfect, and sufficient satisfaction. In this character, therefore, to-day we consider Him.

From St. Matthew's account of His blessed Passion, read to us in the second lesson and gospel for the day, we learn how Christ, as our passover, was sacrificed for us. As our sin-offering, we behold Him in the garden,* "bearing the multitude of our iniquities," (Lev. xvi. 22,) and enduring in His pure and sinless soul the agony which was due to our transgressions; and when we follow Him to Calvary, we see in

* 1st Morn. Less. verse 37, &c.

Him the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world,—that "very paschal Lamb" which was offered up to take away our sins.

But He Who thus gave Himself to be our sin-offering, was also Himself the Priest to offer it. He gave Himself for us, and then by offering His precious Body and Blood, under the outward elements of bread and wine, He provided a perpetual sacrifice for His Church. Thus He became to us "a Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedek."* This is explained to us in the second lesson for this evening, where we are told how He condescended to assume in all things the character of an earthly priest, in order that His priesthood might in all respects be perfect.

Because it was not lawful for priests to act without authority, so Christ the eternal Son of God, took not this honour unto Himself, until it was said unto Him by the Father, "Thou art My Son; this day have I begotten Thee."† (See St. Matthew, iii. 17.) As the priests under the law were men of like passions with ourselves,‡ so Christ took upon Him our sinful nature, that, though Himself without sin, yet "being in all points tempted as we are," He might yet "be touched with a feeling of our infirmities." (Heb. iv. 15.) And as every high priest must have somewhat to offer for sins,‖ so He offered that of which all other sacrifices were only a type, viz., the sacrifice of His Own blessed Body and Blood offered in the Eucharist, and slain upon the Cross. But to the earthly priesthood, He united the heavenly priesthood also.

* 2nd Even. Less. ver. 6; † ver. 5; ‡ ver. 3; ‖ ver. 4.

He was "taken from among men,"* yet at the same time eternal and unchangeable. He was a priest according to the law, yet also an High Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedek; for, like this mysterious personage, who was His type, He was "without beginning and without end," (Heb. vii. 3,) and offered up to God the unbloody sacrifice of bread and wine. (Gen. xiv. 18.) Again, though compassed with infirmity, He was still the eternal Son of the Father, able, through His strong crying and sufferings and tears,† to make a perfect intercession and atonement for us.

So did He become the "Author of eternal salvation to all them that obey Him;"‡ not to such as continue in a hard, impenitent state, as did Pharaoh, Judas, and the wicked Pharisees, of whom we read this day. These willingly remain in the bondage of sin, and therefore cannot expect to be delivered from it. They cannot hope to be cleansed by that Blood which they have counted as an unholy thing, or sanctified by that Spirit to Whom they have done despite. But to such as sincerely hate sin and love holiness, He is a teacher and guide as well as a priest and king. These He brings out with a "high hand and stretched out arm," leading them from the bondage of corruption into the service of Him Whose yoke is perfect freedom.

To impress these solemn truths upon our minds, the captivity of the children of Israel is again brought before us in the lessons for the day.‖ The many disappointments and impedi-

* 2nd Even. Less. verse 1; † verse 7; ‡ verse 9.
‖ Exodus, ix. and x.

ments which attend their rescue are intended to show what a strong hold sin has over those who are in its bonds, and therefore how great is the deliverance our Lord at this time wrought for us. Ten plagues were required to draw out the Israelites from among the idolatrous people; so does God send trial after trial, and warning after warning, to force us from the bonds of sin, and oftentimes inflicts grievous visitations before sinners can be drawn away from the captivity of their own wicked passions. Another awful thought is also conveyed to us in this lesson, which is profitable for our meditation at this time. From it we learn the danger of being brought near to the wonders of God's redemption without having a heart to profit by them. The same mighty works which were the salvation of the Israelites, were to Pharaoh the occasion of destruction. To the one the savour of life unto life, to the other of death unto death. By his insensibility in the midst of warnings, Pharaoh grieved God's Holy Spirit, provoked the Lord to withdraw it from him, and so fell into that fearful state which Holy Scripture expresses by saying that "God hardened his heart."*

And shall we not fall into the same guilt if we listen to the wondrous account of Christ's sufferings and passion, as if we had no part in the redemption which they purchased. May we not fear that if we are thus willingly careless and insensible to the wonders of His love now displayed to us, our hearts may be hardened before another commemoration of them comes round? And this brings us to the second

* 1st Morn. Less. verse 35; Exodus, x. 20.

lesson which is to be drawn from the services now before us, as taught us in the collect and epistle for the day. Here we learn that if we would have Him for our priest and our sacrifice we must take Him for our example also. He was indeed given through God's "tender love"* for the salvation of mankind, but it was in order that mankind should follow the example of His patience and humility. Our sins must be nailed to His Cross, and His holiness transplanted into our lives, if we would truly benefit by His blessed passion. Pride must be cast out in contemplating Him Who "made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant;"† covetousness must be rooted out of the members of Him, Who though He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor; neither can selfishness be suffered to reign in the disciples of Him Who endured pain, reproach, and shame, even death itself, for us and our salvation. Whatsoever be our besetting sin, it must be mortified and cruified, until "the same mind be in us, which was also in Christ Jesus."‡

These are the thoughts with which we are to enter upon the duties of this holy week. Striving to realize that it was our sins which caused Him to suffer, we must resolve and pray that we may not add one thorn more to the crown which pierced His sacred head, or one pang more to the sufferings which agonized His sacred body.

So may we humbly hope that the purposes of God's tender love towards us may be realized; that being thus taken as our example,

* Collect. † Epistle, verse 7; ‡ verse 1.

He may be also our Sacrifice and our High Priest; that being thus crucified in us, He may also be crucified for us, and lead us "by His Cross and Passion unto the glory of His resurrection."*

* Collect for the Annunciation.

Monday in Passion Week.

For the Epistle, Isaiah, lxiii. 1. *Gospel*, St. Mark, xiv. 1.

As each day of this solemn week brings us nearer to the last awful scene of our Lord's life, so each day's service is intended to strengthen our faith, and quicken our devotions towards Him. This day and the following commemorate no remarkable event connected with the history of our Blessed Lord. In the day time He was teaching in the temple, and in the evening He retired with His disciples to Bethany.

The parables of the vineyard and marriage feast, of the wise and foolish virgins, and of the servants and talents, were spoken by our Lord at this time. (St. Matthew, xxiv. and xxv.)

The rebukes and remonstrances contained in these parables, together with the cursing of the barren fig tree, (St. Mark, xi. 12,) and the rejection of the profaners of the temple, which happened on this day, completed the rage and malice of His enemies towards Him. The Church profits by this pause in the history of our Blessed Lord to confirm us in what we have been already taught, and to stir us up for the events which are to come, that so the

Wednesday of this present week may find us prepared to follow our Redeemer in heart and spirit from His betrayal to His crucifixion.* The Scripture for the epistle well suits this purpose.

God is here showing us out of the mouth of His holy prophet those things which Christ should suffer, and we who are commemorating His passion know how it hath been fulfilled. We see in Him the mighty Deliverer Who is returning from the slaughter of our enemies at the price of His own Blood;† for by His death He overcame death for us, and vanquished for us the powers of darkness. We know also that He is the gracious Husbandman Who for our sakes has trodden the wine-press alone;‡ for by the labours and sufferings which He endured in our stead, He exhausted and "pressed down" the measure of His Father's wrath against us. In Him, also, we see the gracious Saviour Who has redeemed us from bondage by the strength of His right hand; for He has delivered us from this present evil world, to lead us through the wilderness into our land of rest.‖

The Sunday lessons for this season have been showing us how He performed the like work of mercy for Moses and His people in the days of old; the Scripture before us would apply the history to ourselves. As He was with them,

* Our Lord Himself does not appear before us until the Thursday evening, nor was He apprehended until that time, but Wednesday being the day on which the wicked transaction was concluded by Judas, the Church on Wednesday remembers His betrayal, and from that day calls us to a closer commemoration of His passion.

† Epistle, verse 1; ‡ verse 2; ‖ verse 6, &c.

so is He also with us. "The angel of His presence"* has saved us, and by His Holy Spirit He "bears us and carries us" through all the changes and chances of this mortal life. But it would also teach us that if our privileges correspond with theirs, so do our dangers also. As they fell, so may we. We may so rebel and vex His Holy Spirit as to "turn Him to be our enemy and fight against us."†

Therefore it is, that with the love and gratitude with which we remember our redemption, we must ever mingle the deepest humiliation, self-abasement, and prayer. At this time, especially, that we are contemplating Him as stained with His Own Blood for our sakes, we must turn to Him with the deepest penitence and contrition. In the words of the prophet, we must acknowledge how we have "erred from His ways, and hardened our hearts from His fear."‡ Reminding Him that we are His people, called by His name, we must profit by this season to implore that He would look graciously down from heaven, "and not restrain" the "bowels of His mercies" towards us.‖

The gospel which follows this portion of Scripture is the first part of the account of our Lord's passion, as recorded by St. Mark. Only one circumstance is added by him to what had been already told us by St. Matthew: when "all the disciples forsook Him and fled, there followed Him a young man having a linen cloth cast about his naked body,"§ and when they laid hold on him, he "left the linen cloth, and fled from them naked."

* Epistle, verse 9; † verse 10; ‡ verse 17; ‖ verse 15.
§ Gospel, verse 50, &c.

This "young man" is supposed by some to have been St. Mark himself; by others, St. John. Whoever he was, may not Christians see in his action a profitable lesson? May they not learn that in order to follow Christ (as we are preparing to do) to the scene of His sufferings and death, we must renounce and cast away all things of the flesh which would entangle us in this course and hinder us from being crucified with Christ in the spirit? St. Paul tells us that "they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts," (Gal. v. 24;) and our Saviour Himself assures us, that if we would come after Him, we must "deny ourselves, and take up our cross daily, and follow Him." (St. Matthew, xvi. 24.)

Tuesday in Passion Week.

For the Epistle, Isaiah, l. 5. *Gospel*, St. Mark, xv. 1.

THE epistle and gospel for this day answer to each other,—the one fulfilling what the other prophesies. Both would present to our faith our Blessed Saviour standing before His accusers, insulted, tormented, and mocked. Thus the services of to-day seem to follow up and complete those of yesterday. Then we saw our Lord represented as a glorious warrior returning victorious from the contest; to-day we behold Him a meek and patient sufferer, fighting by faith and vanquishing by patience. The services then spoke to us of warning and self-abasement; from those of to-day we draw lessons of patience and promises of comfort.

We cannot enter entirely into the depth of our Redeemer's sufferings: we cannot know the full extent of the agony endured by His pure and spotless soul at the sight and hearing of so much wickedness, when, in addition to the wickedness around Him, He bore within Him the weight and torment of our transgressions. When, therefore, we follow Him (as we do in the gospel for this day) through the scene of His trial and condemnation, we can

but adore with wonder, and learn the lesson which the portion of Scripture appointed to accompany it would suggest. From Him, then, we learn the duties of patience and resignation. He, Who could at any moment have commanded twelve legions of angels to free Him from His enemies, was "not rebellious, nor turned away back, but gave His back to the smiters, and His cheeks to them that plucked off the hair; He hid not His face from shame and spitting."* How does this teach His followers to be patient and forbearing towards those who injure or unjustly accuse them, looking upon every affront, not so much as an offence from their fellow-creatures, as a trial sent by God for their spiritual good! Such trials are common in a greater or less degree to all Christians in their daily course, so that there is no member of Christ, who may not in this respect have the privilege of humbly following in the footsteps of his Lord.

Again, in the hour of darkness and agony such as no mortal frame ever knew, we find that our Blessed Saviour "trusted in the Lord His God, and was not confounded."† Hence do Christians derive encouragement and comfort in their hours of darkness and distress; they learn that "if they compass them about with the sparks which they have kindled;"‡ that is, if they trust for comfort to themselves, or their fellow-creatures, they shall but lie down in sorrow; but if, after the example of their Divine Head, the members of Christ "trust in the name of their Lord, and stay upon their God, then they shall not be con-

* Epistle, verse 5, &c.; † verse 10; ‡ verse 11.

founded; they "shall not be afraid of any evil tidings, for their heart standeth fast, trusting in the Lord." (Psalm cxii. 7.)

Thus has our Blessed Redeemer "left to all of us an example that we should follow His steps." To teach us the duty of forbearance, He "reviled not again" when He "was reviled," (St. Peter, ii. 22;) and to train us into perfect submission to the will of God, He cheerfully committed Himself unto Him that judgeth righteously. Well, therefore, may we pray in the collect for this week, that the contemplation of this, His great example, may make us so imitate His patience and humility here, as to become sharers of His glory hereafter.

Wednesday in Passion Week.

Epistle, Heb. ix. 16. *Morning Lessons*, Hosea, xiii.; St. John, xi. 45.
Gospel, St. Luke, xxii. 1. *Evening Lesson*, Hosea, xiv.

THIS is the day on which we commemorate the betrayal of our Blessed Lord. It was on this day that the chief priests and scribes held a council to consult how they might "take Jesus by subtilty, and kill Him," (see St. Matthew, xxvi. 4, 14,) at which council Judas betrayed Him unto them. The wicked thought which seems first to have crossed his mind at the supper in Bethany on the previous Saturday, (St. Matthew, xxvi. 8,) had now ripened into action, and Judas sold his Lord for money.

The second lesson for this morning looks back to the beginning and origin of this awful history.* Here we read that the chief priests and Pharisees, who were watching to find some accusation against Him, made the miraculous raising of Lazarus an excuse for their wicked purposes, and, pretending to think His power dangerous to their nation, commanded that "if any man knew where He were, he should show it, that they might take Him."† Judas was the

* Verse 47; † verse 57.

wretched person who obeyed this wicked command, and gained His miserable reward.

Having thus seen from this second lesson who were the human agents concerned in our Lord's passion, the epistle discloses to us the hidden purposes of God in all these things; showing us why it was necessary that Christ should suffer, and be betrayed into the hands of wicked men to be crucified and slain. For us and for our offences, then, it was that our Blessed Lord and Master was thus delivered up. The apostle would explain this by a reference to earthly laws and legal sacrifices; the laws held by the Jews with respect to a covenant or testament* (for the word is used in both senses) are those which he takes to illustrate this great doctrine. To obtain an inheritance, or benefit by a covenant, certain conditions are required; the death of the testator, or person from whom we inherit, is the necessary condition of our obtaining a promised inheritance; therefore, the death of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who is the dispenser of our promised inheritance, is the necessary condition of our becoming inheritors of the kingdom of heaven. And as with the inheritance, so also with the covenant. The shedding of blood was the condition on which the first covenant depended.† All things belonging to the temple were purged with blood, and without shedding of blood there was no remission of sins. Under the second covenant the precious Blood of Christ Himself must be shed, before men could be released from their sins, and purified for an inheritance into the heavenly places. The benefits of this

* Epistle, verses 16, 18; † verse 18.

second covenant were applied by our Lord to His Church, when, as we read in the gospel for this day, He substituted, in the place of the Jewish ordinance of the passover, that most blessed sacrament and sacrifice of His most Blessed Blood and Body, by which our sins are pardoned and our souls purified*.

We see, then, that though it was by the hands of wicked men that Christ was betrayed and crucified and slain, (see Acts, ii. 23,) yet it was by the determinate council and foreknowledge of God for our salvation that it was so ordained.

While, then, on this day we shudder at the wickedness of Judas, we must remember that our sins, no less than his treachery, were the cause of our Lord's death, and that each time we voluntarily give way to our besetting sin, whether it be covetousness or any other temptation, we wilfully share the traitor's guilt and incur the traitor's danger. With humility, therefore, and self-abasement, let us listen to the pleadings addressed by God to His people through the prophet Hosea; for in them Christ is at this time addressing every penitent soul. Like the rebellious Ephraimites, we have been "sinning more and more;"† we have "set up idols" in our hearts, and sacrificed to our passions and desires. If we continue thus to offend we shall die,‡ but if we "come to Him with trembling" we shall "be exalted." Christ is the Saviour Who has redeemed us from bondage, and Who "knows us"‖ in this wilderness, guiding us, sometimes with the mercy of a benefactor,

* Gospel, verses 17–21. † 1st Morn. Less. verse 2; ‡ verse 1; ‖ verse 5.

sometimes chastening us with the severity of a lion. Warning us that we have destroyed ourselves, He calls to us to return to Him, for that "in Him is our help."* If only we will cast away our gods, the works of our hands, that is, the enticements of the devil, the world, and the flesh, He gives us the most gracious promises, telling us that He will heal our backslidings and love us freely.† Thus through true repentance may our sorrow be turned to joy, and our mourning into gladness. Christ's very death and sufferings, for which we are now so justly grieving, become by His mercy the hope of those who caused them. Our sins occasioned His betrayal, crucifixion, and death; yet it is by His death that He has redeemed us from death, and ransomed us from the power of the grave; that He saith to death, "I will be thy plagues," and to the grave, "I will be thy destruction."‡

* Even. Less. verse 1; † verse 4.
‡ 1st Morn. Less. verse 14.

Thursday in Passion Week.

Epistle, 1 Cor. xi. 17. *Morning Lessons*, Daniel, ix.; St. John, xiii.
Gospel, St. Luke, xxiii. 1. *Evening Lesson*, Jer. xxxi.

THE new covenant in Christ's Blood of which yesterday's epistle spoke, was on this day's evening instituted and ordained. It was on this solemn night that our Blessed Lord and Master left with His Church those pledges of His love, which apply to the faithful receiver the benefits of His most precious Body and Blood.

In remembrance of this new covenant, and also of the other commandment of brotherly love which accompanied it, the Church calls this day "Maundy Thursday," or the "Thursday of the Commandment," and selects the subject of the last Supper for our devout contemplation. In the second lesson for this morning, the whole account of the holy Supper is laid before us by the beloved Apostle St. John. Here we are allowed to gaze upon the sacred scene, and to see our Blessed Redeemer for the last time assembled with His apostles.* Then we behold the Lord of Glory, Him Who was "one with God," "equal with the Father,"

* 2nd Morn. Less.

taking upon Him the form of a servant, and submitting to wash the feet even of those who were most unworthy;* and we learn how in this He hath left us an example, "that we should do as He hath done unto us."† By condescending to this act of humility and charity before distributing the sacred elements, He has taught the children of the new covenant that they must be kind one to another, tender hearted, loving one another as He hath loved them; and that especially in coming to the Holy Communion their fervent charity one towards another must be a necessary condition of their acceptance with God. The epistle selected for this day further shows us the qualifications necessary for partaking worthily of this holy Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. In it St. Paul alludes to some gross abuses which had crept into the Corinthian Church at the celebration of this sacred ordinance.‡ With these we have nothing to do. The regulations of our holy Church are such that no profaneness of this kind can be committed amongst us. But we are not, therefore, without danger. Still do we need the apostle's warning to examine ourselves before we presume to "eat of that bread and drink of that cup;"‖ for if we come lightly or carelessly, without true repentance, or a due sense of the awful nature of these holy mysteries, we are in danger of falling into the sin which the apostle denounces, and of incurring the punishment he threatens.§ No Christian need, however, on this account abstain from so great a privilege. Our Lord came not to call the righteous, but

* 2nd Morn. Less. verse 5; † verse 15.
‡ Epistle, verse 21; ‖ verse 28; § verse 27.

sinners, to repentance. He invites to His holy supper the "poor, the maimed, the lame, and the blind," and those that come to Him He will in no wise cast out. If, therefore, we draw near with an humble sense of God's goodness, and of our own unworthiness, with firm resolutions against sin, and earnest desires of amendment, together with a hearty faith in the merits and death of our Saviour Jesus Christ, we need not doubt but that His Body and Blood will be by us "verily and indeed received." He will wash us, and cleanse us, and admit us to a full share of the benefits of His new covenant. And not only in the New Testament, but also in the Old, are the benefits of this new covenant clearly pointed out. The prophet Jeremiah* prophetically describes the blessedness of those who are admitted into the benefits of the gospel covenant. God is here renewing His covenant with us as He did with His people Israel after their return from the Babylonian captivity. Like them we have been made His people, His sons, and His children. He has drawn us with an everlasting love, and ransomed us from the hand of him that was stronger than us.† Through our manifold backslidings we might have been cut off in the land of the enemy;‡ yet, after we have turned and repented, He will again remember us, and have mercy upon us. He will satiate the weary soul with goodness, and replenish the soul of the sorrowful.‖

Having now contemplated our privileges as partakers of the new covenant, we return to the thought of Him through Whom they were

* Even. Less.; † verse 11; ‡ verse 16; ‖ verse 25.

obtained. We read of Him in the prophet Daniel as "the Messiah Who was to be cut off, but not for Himself."* And so it came to pass. When seventy weeks, or, according to our calculation, 490 years from the return of the Jews from captivity and the rebuilding of their temple, were accomplished, our Lord Jesus Christ, the true Messiah, suffered the painful death of the Cross, for us men and for our salvation. For His captive people who were groaning under the tyranny of sin and Satan did He thus suffer death, and to all those children of the covenant who, like Daniel, turn to Him in confession, and humiliation, and prayer,† will the benefits of His sufferings be applied.

The fulfilment of Daniel's prophecy is to be found in the account of our Saviour's passion, which is read to us on this day in the gospel according to St. Luke. In the account given by this evangelist, two instances of our Lord's wondrous love to sinners are recorded, which well suit the character of this day's services. The pardon of the penitent thief‡ teaches us how unbounded are the mercies of Christ towards those contrite sinners who profit by the opportunities of repentance graciously held out to them; and in His prayer for the forgiveness of His bitterest enemies,‖ we read another lesson of the love and mercy we should exercise even towards those who wrong us, and despitefully use us.

With these thoughts we conclude our meditations for this solemn day. We have seen

* 1st Morn. Less. verse 26; † verses 15–21.
‡ Gospel, verse 43; ‖ verse 34.

how Christ hath loved us, and given Himself a sacrifice for us, as an offering and a sweet smelling savour. (Eph. v. 2.) We must, therefore, walk in love, being followers of Him as dear children. He hath admitted us into the new covenant by the laver of regeneration in holy baptism. Let us not be satisfied till He has made us "clean every whit"* by the continued sprinkling of His precious Blood. As children of His new covenant, He hath left us a new commandment, that we should love one another, as He hath loved us. Let us, then, show that we are His disciples by the love which we bear one towards the other.†

* 2nd Morn. Less. verses 9, 10; † verses 34, 35.

Good Friday.

Epistle, Heb. x. 1. *Morning Lessons*, Genesis, xxii. 1–20.; St. John xviii.
Gospel, St. John, xix. 1. *Evening Lessons*, Isaiah liii.; 1 St. Peter, ii.

Proper Psalms, *Morn.* xxii., xl., liv.
Evening Psalms, lxix., lxxxviii.

GOOD FRIDAY brings us to the last solemn scene of our Lord's sufferings. That most awful event for which we have been preparing is on this day accomplished, and the Blessed Lamb of God, the true Passover, is slain to take away the sins of the world.

But before we contemplate our Redeemer's Cross, we have to follow Him through the course of his most painful sufferings. As we last night left Him applying to His faithful followers the benefits of His most precious death, so now we behold Him going out to purchase them. First, we must listen to His gracious prayer in which He entreats the Father for us, that we might have eternal life, and be with Him where He is; (See St. John xvii.) and we must watch Him through His agony in the garden, when, from the weight of our sins, His sweat was as it were "great drops of blood falling down to the ground." Then, taking up the words of the beloved apostle St. John, who,

as an eye witness of the scene, is selected for our evangelist this day, we read how His sacred body was seized, tormented, and scourged, Himself abused, insulted, and condemned; and we follow Him up the hill of Calvary, resolving in heart and mind to take up our cross and bear it after Him.* About the sixth hour of the day, or twelve o'clock, we remember how He nailed the sins of the whole world with His Body to the Cross, and at three o'clock, or the ninth hour, we behold Him finally overcoming the sharpness of death, and so opening the kingdom of heaven to all believers.

Here, then, we must pause, and seek in the services for this day how to make these meditations profitable to ourselves. The epistle would make us feel the full value of Christ's precious Blood-shedding. By comparing the sacrifices of the Jewish law with that one great and perfect Sacrifice which we are now commemorating, the apostle shews us the infinite blessedness of living under a dispensation, where the shadow has given way to the substance, the type to the reality. Day by day, and year by year,† the priests under the law offered sacrifices, and yet these sacrifices could not in themselves take away sins. They were accepted as pre-figuring the blessed Sacrifice of the death of Christ, but they did not "make perfect"‡ those who offered them. The sacrifice of one day could not atone for the sins of the next, nor the propitiation made for one year blot out the offences of that which was to come. But with the offering of the Body of Jesus Christ‖

* Gospel and 2nd Morn. Less.
† Epistle, verses 1, 11; ‡ verse 1; ‖ verse 10.

it was not so. This is the offering which was to perfect once for all and for ever them which are sanctified.*

Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour, is the great High Priest, who, being Himself holy, harmless, and undefiled, "needeth not to offer first for His own sins, and then for the sins of the people." (Heb. ix. 7; see Lev. xvi. 11.) He is Himself the perfect sin-offering Who bare our sins in His own Body, on Whom the iniquities of us all were laid, and Whose blood was, as on this day, offered up on the altar of the Cross, to make an atonement for our souls. (See Lev. xvii. 11.) We have therefore no more need of sacrifices and offerings for sins. If only we draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our bodies washed with the water of regeneration, and our consciences purified by repentance, we, who were strangers and foreigners, are brought near to God in Christ Jesus, our sins and iniquities are remembered no more, and we have power to enter into the holiest by His Blood.† Such being, then, the benefits which we obtain by the death of Christ, well may we on this day mingle thankfulness and love with sorrow and humiliation, and well does the name of Good Friday apply to the day when the "good things"‡ prefigured by the law were accomplished, and a way‖ of salvation was opened unto all!

But it is not in the law of Moses alone that the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ is prefigured. The patriarchs, and prophets, and psalms, all speak to us by type and prophecy

* Epistle, verse 14; † verse 19;
‡ verse 1; ‖ verse 20.

of the things concerning His death. Does not Abraham's voluntary surrender of Isaac, his only son,* remind us of the love of Him who "spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all?" (Rom. viii. 32.) And in the meek submissive Isaac do we not see a faint image of Him Who laid down His life for us, saying, "Father, not My will, but Thine be done!" The Psalms of David, especially those selected for this day, clearly foretell the sufferings and death of the Messiah. The 22nd Psalm describes the sufferings of His Spirit in the time of His spiritual desertion, when, in the agony of His soul, He cried, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Then it goes on to foretell the cruel mockings and scourgings of the insulting enemies,† and lastly, the Psalmist would remind us for whom it was that our Saviour underwent such cruel torments. He tells us that it was for us, "His chosen seed,"‡ and that we might serve Him unto all generations, that the Son of Man was thus given up.

The 40th Psalm appears to have been written by David on his deliverance from some great danger, but it is clear that from the sixth verse it is Christ Himself who is speaking through his words. He declares His perfect willingness to undertake the work of atonement for us, and do away with the legal sacrifices of the Mosaic covenant.‖ He prays for His own and the people's salvation, rejoices in the confusion of the enemies of the cross,§ and in the exaltation of its faithful servants.¶

* 1st Morn. Less.; † verse 16, &c.; ‡ verse 31;
‖ verse 8, &c.; § verse 18; ¶ verse 19.

The application of the 54th Psalm is plain and easy. David, on the point of being betrayed to his enemies, and yet praying to God in full trust and confidence, is a lively image of Christ, and of those of His members who are persecuted for righteousness' sake.

The 69th Psalm, though written by David when he thought to have perished by the hand of Saul, has been so applied by our Lord* and His apostles in the New Testament, as to leave no doubt that it describes the sufferings of the Son of God in the day of His Passion.

The tone of sorrow which pervades the whole of the 88th Psalm is well suited to the solemn thoughts of this day; and is particularly applicable as describing the unexampled sufferings of the Son of God,† His death and burial,‡ together with His fervent prayers for the accomplishment of the salvation of the Church through Him.

But when we come to the Prophecies of Isaiah,‖ the scene of our Saviour's Passion becomes more vivid, and is described with the minuteness of an eye witness. May we then on this day have grace to look back to this sacred scene with the same faith with which the prophet looked forward to it. May we meditate upon it until with him we behold the "Man of sorrows"§ bearing our griefs, and carrying our burdens, pouring out His Soul unto death, and bearing the sins of many, that He might make intercession for the transgressors.¶

Still, however, it will be to little purpose

* Verse 21, (compare St. Matt. xxvii. 34, 48.)
† Verse 2, &c.; ‡ verses 2, 10, 11, 12.
‖ 1st Evening Lesson; § verse 3, &c.; ¶ verse 12.

that we thus meditate on the Cross of Christ, unless we are willing to deny ourselves, take up our cross, and bear it after Him, following His steps; for "even hereunto" (says St. Peter in the 2nd evening lesson) were we called.* It is by the way of His Cross that Jesus Christ leads us to heaven. He laid it upon us at our baptism, and as it increases in weight He increases our strength to bear it. From infancy to old age there is no member of Christ who may not in some way bear the burden of His Cross. Each time that we deny ourselves, or suffer patiently for Christ's sake, it is Christ who is teaching us to "follow His steps," and leading us back to the "Shepherd and Bishop of our souls."†

But we must not be content with applying the benefits of the Cross of Christ to ourselves alone, we must strive by intercessory prayer to make them profitable unto others also. Christ died to reconcile all in one Body to the Cross; and we, who are the "Body of Christ, and members in particular," (1 Cor. xii. 27,) must pray for our fellow members as well as for ourselves. First, we pray for the congregation with whom we are this day assembled.‡ As children of the same family, we come before Him, and jointly plead the merits of His death and sufferings. Then we extend our prayers to all our fellow members in Christ's Church,‖ who, like us, have been baptized into His death, and are fighting under His Cross. For them we pray that each in his particular station may walk worthy of the vocation to which he is

* Verse 21; † verse 25. ‡ 1st Collect.
‖ 2nd Collect.

called, truly and godly serving the Lord. Lastly, we intercede for all those who have not yet been grafted into the Body of Christ.* We pray that they may "look unto Him from the ends of the earth, and be saved;" that they may with us be made worthy members of that Church which He has on this day purchased with His own Blood.

It is by thus contemplating the Cross of Christ, that Christians may best hope to secure to themselves and others the benefits of His blessed passion. He became, on this day, the propitiation not for our sins only, but also for the sins of the whole world. (1 St. John, ii. 2.) He was "lifted up that He might draw men after Him," (St. John, xii. 32,) and give life to all, but we must "come to Him" as He has commanded, if we would be drawn up after Him, and "have life." (See St. John, v. 40.)

* 3rd Collect.

Easter Eve.

Epistle, 1 St. Peter, iii 17.
Gospel, St. Matt. xxvii. 57.
Morning Less. Zech. ix.; St. Luke, xxiii. 50.
Evening Less. Exod. xiii.; Heb. iv.

Our thoughts on this day follow our Blessed Redeemer into His silent tomb; for it was during the whole of this day that His sacred Body lay in the grave. Of the facts connected with our Lord's burial, St. Matthew and St. Luke give us the full account; the latter in the second morning lesson—the former in the gospel for the day. They tell us how towards the evening of the Friday (the day of His crucifixion) our Lord's Body was taken down from the cross; how Joseph of Arimathea, a rich councillor, fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy, that "He should make His grave with the rich," (Isaiah, liii. 9;) and lastly, we read how the holy women sat in silent contemplation, watching the tomb where their Redeemer lay.*

With them, therefore, let us watch this day, meditating, as far as Holy Scripture will allow us, on that unseen state into which He has passed before us, and through which He will safely bring all who sleep in Him.

The death and burial of our Lord Jesus

* Gospel, verse 61.

Christ is an article of our creed, which is intended for our practical teaching here, as well as for our hope hereafter. In this manner, therefore, the Church now considers it. Out of the very few passages in which Holy Scripture speaks of our Lord's mysterious intermediate state, two are selected as most fitted for our instruction this day. The first is contained in that portion of the prophecies of Zechariah which is read to us as the first lesson for the morning. In this chapter the prophet is describing the victories of Christ over the enemies of His people.* Of these enemies, death was the last which was to be destroyed; and death itself was overcome, when, as on this day, our Saviour descended into the pit of the grave; for when, as at this time, His Soul entered the place of departed spirits, He brought the hope of release both to those whom the grave had already made "its prisoners,"† as well as to such as "through fear of death were all their life-time subject to bondage."

The same thought is conveyed to us in that verse of St. Peter's epistle in which it is said that "He went and preached unto the spirits in prison."‡ This expression "in prison" refers to Hades, or the intermediate state, and might otherwise be rendered "in safe keeping;" therefore from both these passages we are to understand that while the Body of our Divine Redeemer lay in the grave, His soul held communion with that blessed company who are "resting yet a little while, until the number of their fellow-servants and of their brethren shall

* 1st Morn. Less. verses 1–11; † verses 11, 12.
‡ Epistle, verse 19.

be fulfilled." (See Rev. vi. 11.) Thus did our Lord sanctify the grave, and prepare a place of rest and blessedness for those who sleep in Him. That there is such a state of rest and blessedness for all believers, the apostle, writing to the Hebrews in the second evening lesson, again reminds us. Speaking of the rest of the Israelites in Canaan, he explains that this, though a type of the true rest, could not have been that eternal rest of which David spoke;* for, if Joshua had given them rest, David, who lived after Joshua, would not have spoken of another day. "There remaineth, therefore, a rest for the people of God,"† a rest which has been purchased for them by the death and burial of the Son of God.

What the happiness of that state will be "eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive;" it is enough for us to know, that to depart into it, is to be with Christ; that there "the wicked cease from troubling, and there the weary are at rest," (Job, iii. 17;) and that "those who die in the Lord there rest from their labours and are blessed." (Rev. xiv. 13.) Those holy souls with whom we have held communion on earth are there waiting for us to fill up the number of God's elect, and accomplish His kingdom.

But whilst we thus meditate on the happiness of that blessed state, let us, with the apostle, also "fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into this rest, any of us should seem to come short of it.‡ We who have been baptized into Christ must (as the collect reminds us) be buried with Christ in this life before we can

* Verse 8; † verse 9. ‡ Epistle, verse 1.

be safely buried with Him in our death; and as the first evening lesson would also figuratively teach us, we who have been taken out of the Egypt of this world* to be spiritually buried in the waters of baptism, (see following chapter, compare 1 Cor. x. 2,) must walk under the light and guidance of God's Holy Spirit,† before we can arrive safely at the land of our eternal rest.

Thus does the burial of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ represent unto baptized Christians their profession, which is, to die unto sin and continually to mortify all their corrupt affections.‡ The lives of Christ's members are to be formed in all things after the pattern of their Divine Head. As His nativity, His circumcision, and His crucifixion, taught us to be born again, to be circumcised and crucified in the spirit, so His burial teaches us to be dead to the things of this world. The remembrance of our Redeemer's sacred Body stiff and cold, and lying in the tomb, must bury in us all worldly selfish thoughts, making us "take less thought for what we shall eat, or what we shall drink, or wherewithal we shall be clothed." The thought of His still quiet grave must subdue in us all pride, all evil, uncharitable, irritable tempers, and so fit us for that blessed state of calm and quiet rest to which He is bringing us. Having thus been buried with Him in this life, we may humbly hope to be buried with Him in our death, and, together with those blessed souls who have departed in the true faith and fear of His holy Name, wait in peace and hope, for the morning of the resurrection.

* 1st Even. Less. verse 3; † verses 21, 22.
‡ Collect and Baptismal Service.

Easter Day.

Epistle, Col. iii. 1.
Gospel, St. John, xx. 1.
Morning Lessons, Exod. xii.; Rom. vi.
Evening Lessons, Exod. xiv.; Acts, ii. 22.

Proper Psalms, ii., lvii., cxi.
Even. Psalms, cxiii., cxiv., cxviii.

It was on this glorious morning that our Lord Jesus Christ rose from the dead. To those who had been weeping at His Cross, and watching at His tomb, the dawn of this happy day brought the joyful news of His rising again; and so it is still. To those who have been truly following the sorrows of His passion does each returning Easter morning still bring the joys of His resurrection; for, no sooner have we confessed our sins in God's house, and in His Name received absolution, than the Church at once proclaims to us the joyful tidings that "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us,"—that "Christ our first fruits is risen from the dead!"*

These two expressions make us realize the full extent of the blessings conferred on us by the resurrection of Christ. When the Jews kept their passover, it was to be a "feast to the

* Anthem for the day.

Lord unto all generations."* They remembered the wonderful deliverance that had been wrought for them; they hoped for a merciful acceptance of their sacrifice, and rejoiced.

But we who keep the Christian passover keep a still higher feast. Not only do we remember the greatest of all deliverances, and commemorate the greatest of all sacrifices, but we have the assurance, (which they had not,) that our sacrifice has not been offered only, but accepted; that He, Who was slain for our sins, has risen again for our justification.

Again, when the Jews desired that God would bless the coming harvest, they offered up their first fruits to Him, and so brought a blessing upon the remaining crop. (Lev. xxiii. 10, 11.) This action shadowed forth as in a type, that which was accomplished in the Christian Church on this day. Christians are now the harvest of the Almighty; Christ, their Head, is the first fruits, by the offering up of Whom the whole Christian Church is sanctified and blessed. As, therefore, the springing up of the first fruits is an earnest or assurance of the springing up of the whole harvest, so likewise the resurrection of Jesus Christ, our Head and first fruits, is an earnest or assurance of our own resurrection. From it we derive the comfortable assurance that "our souls shall not sleep in death, neither our flesh see corruption," (Psalm xvi. 11;) but that as "Christ rose from the dead, so shall every man rise in his own order; Christ the first fruits—afterwards, they that are Christ's, at His coming." (1 Cor. xv. 23.)

* 1st Morn. Less, verse 14.

No wonder then that the day which brings to us such unspeakable blessings should from all ages have been observed with the greatest solemnity. The early Christians called it the queen of all feasts, the greatest of all festivals, the highest of all Sundays; and we, following in their steps, still reckon it to be the highest festival of the whole year. Christmas has indeed been called the "mother of all festivals," because it is the beginning and origin of all; but Easter is the "queen of feasts," because it crowns and completes them all.

To celebrate God's praises on this holy day, six proper psalms are appointed, in which we thank God for the wonders of redemption and salvation. In the second psalm, David is prophetically speaking of the victory of Christ over His enemies. When, therefore, we repeat this psalm we celebrate the triumph of our Redeemer over our spiritual enemies, and rejoice that now, by His glorious resurrection, He has perfected the victory, and is "for ever set upon His holy hill of Sion."*

The 57th Psalm begins by recalling to our minds the humiliation and death of the Messiah;† but from the 6th verse the tone changes, and we break into such glorious strains as are fitted for the day, when our Blessed Redeemer overcame death, and opened unto us the gate of everlasting life. On this holy morning then, especially, should Christians "awake up early" to sing and give praise to God, to magnify Him above the heavens, and His glory above all the earth.‡

In the 111th psalm we praise God for the

* Verse 6. † Verses 1–6; ‡ verse 9.

great and marvellous "work" which He has wrought for us.* It was as on this day that "He sent redemption unto His people, and commanded His covenant for ever;"† therefore "His work is worthy to be praised and had in honour;" we will, then, "praise the Lord with our whole heart secretly among the faithful and in the congregation.‡

The 113th Psalm is also a hymn of praise to our great Redeemer. In it we extol the mercy of Him Who, though having His dwelling so high, yet humbled Himself so far as to undertake the work of saving the poor and sinful sons of earth.‖

The 114th Psalm celebrates the exodus, or going forth of the children of Israel from Egypt, and their redemption from the tyranny of Pharaoh. Christians use it on this day as typical of a far higher redemption. They praise God for having taken them out of the world, as out of a land of strange people, and brought them to serve God in His sanctuary, and under His dominion.§

We conclude the psalms for this day with a triumphant hymn, which, having been sung by king David, while at the head of his people he led them in solemn procession to the temple, may be considered as sung by Christ, the King of God's true Israel, on the occasion of His resurrection and exaltation. He it was, Who, as on this day, became our salvation, that we might not die but live, and declare the works of the Lord;¶ that we might live in this world a life of grace, and in the world to come a life

* Verse 4; † verse 9; ‡ verse 1. ‖ Verses 5, 6, &c.
§ Verses 1, 2. ¶ Psalm cxviii. 17.

of glory. He opened unto us this day the gates of righteousness that we might go into them, and give thanks unto the Lord.* This, then, is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it.†

With our hearts full of these joyful strains, we are prepared to hear the wonderful account of our Lord's resurrection, as related to us by St. John in the gospel,‡ and commented upon by St. Peter in this evening's second lesson.‖ The gospel tells of the trembling doubt and uncertainty, with which St. Peter and St. John first visited the holy sepulchre. Mary Magdalene had already ascertained the fact that the sacred body was no longer there,§ but in her haste to communicate it to the two disciples, she missed the appearance of the angels, (St. Matthew, xxviii. 2; St. Mark, xvi. 5; St. Luke, xxiv. 4,) who in the meantime had proclaimed to the other women the joyful news that "He was not there, but was risen as He said." When, therefore, she, and the two apostles arrived at the empty tomb, it was under the impression that the Body of the Lord had been taken away to be laid they knew not where.¶ But they who sincerely seek the Lord Jesus, are not long suffered to remain in doubt or error. The devoted Mary Magdalene was, as we afterwards find, the person whom our Saviour honoured with His first interview, and it is from the mouth of St. Peter himself, that in this evening's lesson is preached to us the resurrection.

This passage confirms to us the hopes which

* Psalm cxviii. 19; † verse 24. ‡ St. John, xx.
‖ Acts, ii. § Gospel, verse 2; ¶ verses 6, 7.

the solemnities of this holy day have already awakened. Quoting the words of David's Psalm,* the apostle here shows us the reality of the Resurrection of Christ, and the benefits to be derived from it. After making it clear that it was not David, but One higher than David, even Christ our Lord, Whose "Soul was not left in hell, and Whose Flesh saw no corruption," he would lead us to apply this truth to our own immediate support and consolation. Christ, then, we are taught, loosed Himself from the bands of death, that He might show to His followers the path of life, and make them full of the joy of His countenance; and that it is not to His immediate followers only that the words apply, we know from the subsequent assurance that the promise is unto us, even to us who are afar off, and to as many as the Lord our God shall call.†

Having now been taught why we must so gladly keep this feast, the remainder of the services teach us how to keep it. Fer this purpose the first morning lesson takes us back to the rules relating to the Jewish passover; that from the laws of God concerning the celebration of the typical feast we may learn His will with regard to the Christian festival which it foreshadowed. The sacrifice of the passover in all things corresponded with the sacrifice of the death of Christ. The lamb slain was to be one without blemish and without spot, chosen from among the flock.‡ Christ, the Lamb of God was holy, harmless, undefiled, (Heb. vii. 26,) chosen from among His own people to be

* 2nd Even. Less. verse 25; Psalm xvi. 10, 11.
† 2nd Even. Less. verse 39. ‡ 1st Morn. Less. verse 5.

sacrificed for the sins of the world. The blood of this paschal lamb applied, according to God's commandment, upon the door posts of the respective houses, was to be the safeguard of the Israelites, when the destroying angel should pass by.* The Blood of Jesus Christ, our very Paschal Lamb, applied to our bodies according to God's ordinances, and received into our hearts by faith, shall be our safeguard in the day of God's fierce anger; for, when the destroying angel shall be sent to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity, he will "pass over"* those who will be found to have the name of God sealed in their foreheads. (See Rev. vii. 3; xxii. 4; Ezek. ix. 4.) Again, as the typical sacrifice and feast of the Jewish passover was to be kept up unto all generations,† in remembrance of the wonderful deliverance wrought by God at this time; so is the commemorative sacrifice and feast of the Holy Eucharist to keep up amongst ourselves the remembrance of the wonderful deliverance wrought for us by our Lord's death, until He come.

And as in the institution and benefits of this feast, so also in the manner of partaking of it, are the Jewish laws profitable for our learning. To celebrate aright this holy feast, the Jews were commanded to put away leaven out of their houses, and to eat nothing but unleavened bread.‡ Now, leaven is an emblem of sin: its property is to stir up and swell that with which it is mixed, so as to change its very nature and quality. Just so may the very smallest sin, if once wilfully admitted and retained in the heart, stir up and increase so as to change the

* 1st Morn. Less. verse 13; † verse 14; ‡ verse 20.

very nature of the regenerate soul. Therefore must Christians who would celebrate aright their holy passover, put away from their hearts the very smallest leaven of malice and wickedness, and resolve to serve God in sincerity of living and truth.* Again, we read that when the Israelites ate their feast, they were to do so with their loins girded, their shoes on their feet, and their staves in their hands,†—and so must redeemed Christians, who would truly "keep the feast" stand, as strangers and pilgrims, (1 St. Peter, ii. 11,) ready to go out into the land into which the Lord their God is leading them; as men having here no continuing city, (Heb. xiii. 14,) but seeking one to come, they must stand with their loins girt about with truth, and their feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, (Eph. vi. 14, 15,) continually looking for, and hasting unto the coming of the day of Christ.

But we Christians, who have been "redeemed by the Blood of the Lamb," have a still higher lesson to learn, which the passover of the Israelites could not teach us, and which it is reserved for St. Paul in this morning's second lesson to unfold to us.‡ The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ our Head, represent the change which passes upon every one of His members at their baptism. This is why the feast of Christ's resurrection was chosen by the early Church as an especial season for administering that holy sacrament, and why the passage of the Israelites through the Red Sea, by which "God figures unto us His

* Anthem for the day, (1 Cor. v. 8.)
† 1st Morn. Less. verse 11, &c. ‡ Rom. vi.

holy baptism," (see Baptismal Service; also 1 Cor. x. 2,) is so constantly brought before us at this time. The covering or sprinkling of the body with water represents deadness unto sin; it is a sign that they who are baptized into Christ's death* have nailed their sins to His Cross, and will no more serve them; while the rising again out of the water implies that they are risen again unto righteousness, alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.† Just as the Israelites, on stepping out of the Red Sea, left their enemies behind them in its waves, and set forward to walk through the wilderness unto the promised land, so we, who have risen out of the waters of baptism, leave our spiritual enemies behind us in its waves, and set forward to "seek those things which are above," with our "affections set on things above, not on things on the earth."‡ It was then that God's special grace, preventing or going before us, first put into our minds good desires;‖ it remains with us whether we will bring the same to good effect. Let us, therefore, in the words of this day's collect, beg "His continual help" to enable us so to do. Each day as we rise out of our sleep to our daily duties, let us also rise again unto newness of life, as risen members of our risen Lord; daily mortifying our members which are upon the earth, (especially those sins which most easily beset us,) and daily "yielding ourselves unto God as those that have been made alive from the dead."§

* 2nd Morn. Less. verse 3; † verse 11. ‡ Epistle, verses 1, 2. ‖ Collect. § 2nd Morn. Less. verse 13.

It is only by thus keeping the Christian passover on earth that we can hope to be "called to the marriage supper of the Lamb in heaven." Only by thus continually rising with Christ unto newness of life here, can we hope that when He Who is our life shall appear, we also shall "appear with Him in glory."*

* Epistle, verse 4.

Easter Monday.

For the Epistle, Acts, x. 34.
Gospel, St. Luke, xxiv. 13.
Morning Lessons, Exodus, xvi.; St. Matt. xxviii.
Evening Lessons, Exodus, xvii.; Acts, iii.

THE first burst of triumphant joy being over, the Church spends these two days in examining more minutely the different particulars connected with our Saviour's resurrection, and in impressing upon our minds the blessed truths to be gathered from it. The second lesson for this morning and the gospel for the day distinctly record three several appearances of our Blessed Lord. We know both from St. Mark and St. John that He had already appeared to Mary Magdalene, (St. Mark, xvi. 9; St. John, xx. 16,) while she stood without at the sepulchre weeping. The manifestation to the three women, which St. Matthew here records,* is therefore supposed to be the second time of our Lord's appearing. Of course it is very difficult so to put together the short notices given by different evangelists, as to form a connected history of these great events; but with regard to the women, it is generally thought that while the

* Verse 9.

two other Marys were proceeding to deliver to the apostles the message of the angels, (St. Matthew, xxviii. 8,) the Magdalene was honoured with our Saviour's presence. They, overwhelmed by their feelings of fear and joy, had not yet fulfilled their mission when she with her usual eagerness overtook them by the way, and so the three were again together, when Jesus met them, saying, "All hail!"* The next appearance which this day's services record, is that of our Saviour joining His disciples on their road to Emmaus;† with their minds full of the wonderful events which had happened, and anxiously enquiring after truth, they were communing together and reasoning, when our Saviour drew near and walked with them. Their Lord Himself spoke to them and taught them, though they knew it not. First, He makes known the power of His resurrection, and then, when He had prepared them for it, He vouchsafes a more sensible manifestation of His presence.‡ But the last appearance of our Blessed Lord, and that which more closely concerns ourselves, is the one which is recorded by St. Matthew in the second lesson for this morning. It was at this time that our Saviour left with His apostles that commission and promise through which we of the Apostolic Church claim His presence amongst us up to the present hour.‖ Upon the strength of that promise we know that He Who rose again and ascended into heaven is with us still, guiding us and teaching us through human instruments, though we see

* 2nd Morn. Less. verse 9. † Gospel, verse 13; ‡ verse 29. ‖ 2nd Morn. Less. verse 20.

Him not; strengthening us through outward means, and thus preparing us for a more open manifestion of His presence.

From the Scripture appointed for the epistle, as well as that selected for the second evening lesson, we find how soon the apostles took upon themselves the execution of their commission; for in each of these passages the apostles are instructing their converts, and through them ourselves, in the great truths concerning the doctrine of the resurrection. The former declares it to us by word only;* the cure of the impotent man, in the latter, makes known not in word only, but in deed and in truth, the power and certainty of Christ's resurrection.†

Both the Old Testament lessons continue the parallel (which those of yesterday began) between the redeemed people of Israel and baptized Christians. Yesterday, we read how the children of Israel "saw that great work" which God did upon their enemies, (Exodus, xiv. 31;) yesterday, in like manner, did we of the Christian Church see that great work which God did upon the enemies of our salvation. We learnt how, by the power of Christ's resurrection, we were raised up out of the waters of baptism, to serve Him here in a life of grace, hereafter in a life of glory. But here comes the awful warning to which to-day's lessons would lead us.

All who passed safely through the waves of the Red Sea did not arrive safely at the land of promise; those who, by the miracle recorded yesterday, were redeemed and placed on their road to Canaan, are to-day murmuring and

* Epistle, verse 40. † 2nd Even. Less. verse 16.

rebelling,* and tempting the Most High God, so that they are overthrown in the wilderness.

Now, these things, says St. Paul, "happened unto us for ensamples." (1 Cor. x. 11.) They are intended to remind us of what may befall ourselves; to teach us, that though we have been safely brought through the waters of baptism, we may be overthrown before we arrive at the kingdom of heaven. God, indeed, has provided for us the same privileges that He did for them. We have just seen that He has instituted means by which to support and nourish us in the wilderness of the world; for it is by the dispensing of His Holy Word and Sacraments, through those servants whose commission we have just read,† that He feeds us with the bread of life,‡ and gives us of the water of life freely.‖

But then, we have to remember that the eternal life which these blessed means implant in us, will be either our happiness or our misery. God, Who raised up His Son Jesus from the dead, will also raise us up by His Own power; but while some rise to everlasting life, others will rise to shame and everlasting contempt. (Daniel, xii. 3.)

If then, like Mary Magdalene, we watch and pray—if, like the two disciples we strive to walk with Him, keeping Him in our thoughts in our going out and coming in—He, Who has raised us up to newness of life, will guide us through the changes and chances of this world

* 1st Morn. Less. verse 2.
† 2nd Morn. Less. verses 19, 20.
‡ 1st Morn. Less. verse 4; compare St. John, vi. 48, &c.
‖ 1st Even. Less. verse 6; compare 1 Cor. x. 4.

unto a joyful resurrection. But if, like the sinful Israelites, we in our hearts turn back again into Egypt, lusting after evil things as they also lusted, and tempting Christ as they also tempted Him, God will not with us be well pleased. (1 Cor. x. 6, 9.) We may be overthrown in the wilderness of this world, and (unless we rise again by repentance) may wake up in the world to come — not to the resurrection of life, but to the resurrection of damnation.

Easter Tuesday.

For the Epistle, Acts, xiii. 26. *Morning Lessons*, Exodus, xx.; St. Luke, xxiv. 1–13.
Gospel, St. Luke, xxiv. 36. *Evening Lessons*, Exodus, xxii.; 1 Cor. xv.

THE resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ is the foundation of all our hopes; for if "Christ be not risen from the dead, then is our faith vain, we are yet in our sins."* This is the doctrine which was preached by St. Peter to the Gentiles,† by St. Paul to the Jews,‡ and which has ever been (at this season especially) preached to us by the Christian Church.

The second lesson for this morning, gives us St. Luke's account of our Lord's resurrection. It tells of St. Peter's visit to the empty tomb,‖ and though it does not mention any appearance of our Blessed Lord, yet it is generally supposed that our Saviour's manifestation to St. Peter, of which the second evening lesson speaks,§ took place whilst the apostle was thus lingering about his Master's grave. The Scripture appointed for the epistle contains one of St. Paul's sermons to the Jewish converts wherein he preaches to them Jesus and the resurrection; and the gospel

* 2nd Evening Lesson, verse 17.
† Epistle for Easter Monday. ‡ Epistle, verse 36.
‖ 2nd Morn. Less. verse 12; § verse 5.

records the last appearance of our Saviour to the ten disciples when He became miraculously visible amongst them, to tell them how "Christ had suffered and risen again," in order that repentance and remission of sins should be preached unto all nations in His Name.*

Thus has the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ been fully made known to us out of Holy Scripture. From the mouths of apostles and prophets and evangelists, even from that of our Blessed Lord Himself it has been delivered unto us how that Christ rose again according to the Scriptures.† Let us then see that this glorious truth has not been delivered to us in vain. The commemoration of our Lord's resurrection will be profitable to us only in so much as it leads us to think of and prepare for our own resurrection. To this subject, therefore, does the closing chapter of these Easter services direct our thoughts.

The resurrection of the body is one of those mysteries which is above our understanding. We cannot in this imperfect state fully realize the fact that "when worms shall have destroyed this body, yet in our flesh we shall see God." (Job, xix. 26.) Still, to help our weak faith in this important point, the natural world around affords many types and emblems. One of these especially is here‡ dwelt upon by St. Paul, as being continually present to the eyes of all. We know that the seed which is hereafter to form a plant or tree, is, when put into the ground, nothing but a bare grain, it may chance

* Gospel, verse 47.
† 2nd Even. Less. verses 3, 4; ‡ verse 35, &c.

of wheat or of some other grain,* but by the mighty power of God it becomes, when it springs out of the ground, a fruitful plant, or a glorious tree, so that the birds of the air may come and lodge under the branches thereof;—so also is the resurrection of the dead. The dead body of a member of Christ is put into the ground in "sure and certain hope of a joyful resurrection." By the mighty power of Christ "whereby He is able to subdue all things unto Himself," that which is thus sown a natural body is raised up a glorious and spiritual body, fashioned even like unto His own. (See Phil. iii. 21.) And not only as to the manner of our resurrection, but also as to our state after we are raised do we again look to nature for our learning. There are, we know, different kinds of flesh, different kinds of bodies, and there will be different degrees of glory.† In our Father's house are many mansions; as He has assigned us our different positions and advantages on earth, so He has assigned us our different degrees of glory in heaven. But let not our hearts be troubled. (St. John, xiv. 1, &c.) Whatever that particular place may be, He is gone to prepare it for us, and if we believe in Him, when He comes again He will receive us unto it.

With such glorious prospects in view, how diligently should we strive te preserve our bodies as living temples, holy and acceptable unto Him. To help us in this work the commandments given by God to His chosen poople will be an especial means.‡ They were the

* 2nd Even. Less. verse 37: † verse 41, &c.
‡ 1st Morn. Less.

best guide in conducting the Israelites to the land of promise, and they, as ratified and confirmed by our Lord, will be our best rule in preparing for that place wherein "shall not enter any thing that defileth." If, however, we should chance, as they did, to stumble in the strait and narrow way, we have still a more powerful Mediator than Moses* at the right hand of God, even Jesus Christ the Righteous, Who is our Advocate with the Father, (1 St. John, ii. 1,) "continually making intercession for us." (Hebrews, vii. 25.) If we abide in Him, we shall have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming. (1 St. John, ii. 28.) When the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven, with the voice of the archangel and the trump of God, then shall we be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we be ever with the Lord. (1 Thes. iv. 16.)

Thus to those who believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, does death lose its sting, and the grave its victory.† Christ is risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept.‡ If, then, we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so we believe that them that sleep in Jesus shall God bring with Him. (1 Thess. iv. 14.)

* 1st Evening Lesson, verses 31 – 34.
† 2nd Evening Lesson, verse 55; ‡ verse 20.

First Sunday after Easter.

Epistle, 1 St. John, v. 4. *Morning Lesson*, Numb. xvi.
Gospel, St. John, xx. 19. *Evening Lesson*, Numb. xxii.

THE whole period of forty days between our Lord's resurrection and His ascension is one continued festival. This time was spent by our Divine Redeemer in speaking to His disciples of the things concerning the kingdom of God, and preparing them for it; just so does Christ, through His Church, speak to His members even now. By the services between the festival of Easter and that of the Ascension, the Christian who has been rising again with Christ learns to walk through this world only as a passage to a joyful ascension.

Our admission into the Church of Christ is the first step in this heavenly course. It is in that holy sanctuary (established by Christ Himself during the course of these forty days) that Christians who live in the world are yet enabled to live above the world as preparing for heaven; therefore to the institution of this holy Church,* our blessings and privileges in it, as well as our dangers, does this first Sunday after Easter call our attention. These services

* Epistle and Gospel.

were originally intended for those new converts who, having been baptized on Easter eve, now came to lay up in the Church their baptismal robes as a token of their new duties and privileges; but they are no less suited to us, who, having just risen again with Christ, have thus renewed our baptismal covenant, and bound ourselves anew to a holy and a risen life.

The epistle calls back our thoughts to the "water and blood which our Blessed Saviour shed out of His most precious side for the forgiveness of our sins;"* for in these healing streams does the Church take her life and beginning. It is from this fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness that the sacraments of the Church derive all their efficacy; the water of holy baptism, and the sacred elements in the holy communion, being the outward signs whereby the blessings then poured out are now communicated to mankind.

Christ, present by His Spirit in these holy ordinances, does through them still wash and strengthen us with that water and blood which once flowed upon the Cross. Through them it is that, though risen and ascended into heaven, He still bears witness on earth in "the Spirit, the water, and the blood."†

But He Who thus provided means for our outward support and refreshment, also provided human instruments by which they might be administered. The same gracious Saviour Who did "shed out of His precious side both water and blood for the forgiveness of our sins," also "gave commandment to His disciples that they should go and teach all nations,

* Epistle, verses 6 and 8; † verse 8.

baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." (Baptismal Service.) From this commission, given in the gospel for the day,* do the bishops and pastors of the Church take their authority. They are the visible guides and governors appointed by Christ our Head, to conduct the Church while she is wandering in the wilderness of this world; and to them, therefore, for their office' sake is our obedience due. It is true that while the "treasure" is thus committed unto "earthen vessels" (2 Cor. iv. 7,) we may meet with those who are unfaithful to their trust. We read in the lesson for this evening, that Balaam, who was a prophet of the true God, yet hired himself to curse the people of God.† Balaam, however, (as we shall see by the close of this history,) was not allowed to accomplish his purpose. He was compelled by the power of the Almighty to utter blessings on that very nation whom by his own will he had consented to curse. While the commission of God rested upon his head, he "could not go beyond the commandment of the Lord, to do less or more."‡ And so it is also in our own case. Whatever may be the mind of those who dispense God's holy mysteries, yet so long as the commission of God rests upon their heads,—so long as they administer the Church's ordinances, and use the Church's prayers, they carry with them the blessings of God whether they will or no—"the excellency of the treasure is of God, and not of them." (2 Cor. iv. 7.)

Such being then the guidance and help which our God has provided for us in His holy Church,

* Verses 21–23. † Even. Less. ver. 21, &c.; ‡ ver. 18.

how great must be the sin of those who willingly separate themselves from her, and cast off the spiritual rulers placed over them by God. Such persons may well take warning by the punishment of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, related in this morning's lesson ;* though they may not indeed be visited with so open and signal a judgment ; yet, having once forsaken the strait and narrow way in which God was guiding them, they cannot tell to what misery they may be led in these paths of their own choosing. As, however, it is our privilege to be admitted into the sanctuary of God, and by His mercy still to remain in it, we have rather to learn from the services of this day what is the extent of our privileges and the responsibilities they bring with them.

As reconciled children of God in Christ Jesus, we are allowed (as we do in the collect for this day) to call God "our Father,"†— we have a part in the justification† purchased for us by the death of Christ, and we look forward to the promise of eternal life, which God hath given "in His Son."‡

But pardon and remission of sins must ever be accompanied by repentance and newness of life. This truth is made known to us both under the Old and New Testaments by the significant emblem of water. In the former, by the water of justification which preceded the pouring out of the blood of atonement ; (Lev. xvi. 4, 24 ;) under the latter, by the water, which, mingling with ‖ the Blood of expiation, which flowed from our Saviour's Body, was to

* Verse 32. † Collect. ‡ Epistle, verse 11.
‖ See Epistle.

represent the purifying and sanctifying influence of God's Holy Spirit. Thus we learn that an admission to outward privileges will avail us nothing, unless our hearts are truly turned and converted to God. Of this we have a fearful instance brought before us this day in the person of Balaam. This man was professedly a servant of the true God, but in his heart he "loved the wages of unrighteousness." (2 St. Peter, ii. 15.) He knew God's will, but because it suited not his own covetous purposes, therefore he did it not. He even blasphemously thought to change the mind of God,* when it had been so fully made known to him, because it opposed the devices and desires of his own heart. His pretending to wait for the word of the Lord,* while his mind was thus bent on evil, could therefore be nothing but a mockery of God, and as such met with its just reward. God's very answer to him† on this occasion was made to be the means of his punishment; for by granting him leave to follow his wicked desires, the Lord visited him with the most awful judgment that can befall the sons of men. He was left to himself, given up to a reprobate mind, and insensible even to the miracle‡ by which God "sought to reprove his madness," (2 St. Peter, ii. 16,) was at length hurried on to perdition.

It is not enough then that we profess to call God "our Father,"‖ or to believe in the merits of Christ's justification, unless we are joined to Him by a lively faith, such a faith as will enable us to cast away the leaven of malice and

* Even. Lesson, verse 19; † verse 20; ‡ verse 28.
‖ Collect and Epistle.

wickedness, and serve Him in pureness of living and truth. "For this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith;"*—without this faith, we are "dead while we live:" with it, we are lively members of Christ's Body;—without it, the words which the Church puts into our mouth are but dull and empty sounds: with it, we speak them as in the presence of our Saviour and our God. Without this living faith, the Church's ordinances are but cold and lifeless ceremonies: with it they are the means by which God enables us to "overcome the world," and brings us to "eat of the tree of life in the paradise of God." (Revelations, ii. 7.)

* Epistle, verse 4.

Second Sunday after Easter.

Epistle, 1 St. Peter, ii. 19. *Morning Lesson*, Numbers, xxiii. and xxiv.
Gospel, St. John, x. 11. *Evening Lesson*, Numbers, xxv.

Last Sunday we were taught to look to the Church as the fold in which we shall find safety and protection, while like lost sheep we wander through the dangers of this troublesome world. To-day we learn to look up to Christ as the Shepherd Who receives us into this fold, and feeds and sustains us in it. It is under this emblem, therefore, that the services for this day consider Him. "A good shepherd," says our Lord Himself in the gospel, "giveth his life for the sheep,"* — so was Christ unto us a sacrifice for sin,† "bearing our sins in His own Body on the tree."‡ As a good shepherd delivers his sheep from the wolf at the expense of his own life,‖ so did Christ through His death destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil. (Hebrews, ii. 14.)

But a good shepherd is not only the saviour and defender of his flock — he is their leader

* Verse 11. † Collect. ‡ Epistle, verse 24. ‖ Gospel, verse 11.

also. When he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice, (St. John, x. 4;) so is Christ to us not only a "sacrifice for sin," but also an ensample of godly life."* He expects that those whom He has brought into His fold should "hear His voice, and follow Him." (St. John, x. 27.) The sheep have no other means than this of shewing their sense of their shepherd's kindness; neither have we any other means of shewing our gratitude for the "inestimable benefit" of our Saviour's sacrifice, than by "following the blessed steps of His most holy life."*

It is on this account that the epistle sets before us our Saviour's conduct to His enemies, as being one point in which the disciples of Christ may imitate the example of their Master. He, Who was Himself "brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He openeth not His mouth," (Isaiah, liii. 7,) would have His followers to bless them that curse them, and to pray for those that despitefully use and persecute them — when they are reviled, to revile not again — when they suffer, to "threaten not," but to "commit themselves unto Him that judgeth righteously;"† copying as disciples of the good shepherd, the harmless and inoffensive character of the sheep. But it is not in the act of forgiveness alone, that we are called upon to follow the blessed steps of Christ's most holy life. Our profession is, to follow in all things the example of our Lord, and to be made like unto Him. (Baptismal Service.) Our Lord's life

* Collect. † Epistle, verse 23.

in the flesh was such, that there is no member of His, of any age or station, who may not find in Him a pattern and a guide. He was subject to His parents, so may we be obedient and submissive to ours; He did resist temptations, that we might not be overcome by them; He went about doing good, that we might learn from Him not to be backward in works of charity; He did deny Himself, that we might not indulge our vain desires. He was meek, so should this meekness, then, be the rule of all our actions; He was faithful in all His Father's house, so should we be also in all the duties of our calling and relations; He was entirely resigned to His Father's pleasure, under the severest chastisements; let us pray that He would teach us this self-resignation too.*

To follow even at a distance such a heavenly pattern, is indeed a high and lofty aim; but we may without presumption attempt it, when we remember that "our sufficiency is not of ourselves;" it is the gift of God. If only we be humble and obedient, the great Shepherd of the sheep, Who once renewed us in the image of Christ, will lead us on, step by step, until the "same mind be in us which was also in Christ Jesus." (Phil. ii. 5.)

Of the watchful and tender care of God over His flock, the lesson for this morning gives us abundant proof. Israel was the chosen flock or people of God. He had separated them to be a peculiar nation unto Himself, above all the nations that were in the earth; He had taken them out of Egypt, and given them, as it were, "the strength of an unicorn."† But now that

* Horneck. † Morn. Less. (Numb. xxiv.) verse 8.

the wickedness and idolatry of the surrounding nations had increased, God's people would need some more signal declaration of His peculiar favour. This, then, is the object of the blessing uttered upon them in this morning's lesson. In this glorious prophecy, God confirms to the one nation His promised help, while to the others He betokens the withdrawal of His divine favour; Balaam, the wicked prophet, and Moab, the enemy of Israel, being the unwilling instruments by which He does so.

The prophet is here beholding from a height the peace and harmony of the tribes of Israel, encamped under the guidance of their Divine Leader.* The Spirit of God by Which he is moved leads him to speak in figures and emblems of the strength of Israel;† of the spiritual support given to this people;‡ and, lastly, to foretell the glorious Star‖ Which should "arise out of Jacob," to lighten the Gentiles, as well as to be the glory of God's people Israel.

So long then as the Israelites remained under the guidance of their Divine Shepherd, they were safe. "Surely there could be no enchantment against Jacob, neither any divination against Israel."§ It was only when, like lost sheep, they erred and strayed from God's ways, by mixing with the idolatrous nations around, and falling into their wicked practices,¶ that they fell, and, as we read this evening, died in numbers of four and twenty thousand. "Now these things are written for our admonition." (1 Cor. x. 11.) The Church of Christ is now as Israel then was, the flock of God.

* Morn. Less. (Numb. xxiii.) verse 9; † verse 10; ‡ verses 5, 6; ‖ verse 17; § verse 23. ¶ Even. Less.

The Lord looks down from heaven, and beholds with delight the peace, unity, and harmony, enjoyed by its faithful members. He "feeds them in green pastures, and leads them forth beside the waters of comfort." It is only when they wilfully go astray, and refuse to retnrn, that He leaves them to themselves, and gives them up to destruction.

Let us then pray (especially at this season) that He, "Who brought again our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead, the great Shepherd of the sheep, would make us perfect in every good work to do His will, working in us that which is well pleasing in His sight." (Heb. xiii. 20, 21.) If we have erred, and strayed from His ways, let us pray that "as a shepherd seeketh out his sheep, so He would seek us and deliver us out of all the places whither we have been scattered," (Ezekiel, xxxiv. 12,) so that with those other sheep whom He will hereafter bring to Himself, we may all be made one fold under one Shepherd.*

"God is not a man, that He should lie; neither the son of man, that He should repent."† To the faithful and obedient members of His fold He has promised that they "shall never perish, neither shall any man be able to pluck them out of His Father's hand."‡ He has said to them: "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you His kingdom." (St. Luke, xii. 34.)

* Gospel, verse 16.
† Morn. Less. (Numb. xxiii.) verse 19.
‡ Gospel, verse 29.

Third Sunday after Easter.

Epistle, 1 St. Peter, ii. 11. *Morning Lesson*, Deut. iv.
Gospel, St. John, xvi. 16. *Evening Lesson*, Deut. v.

HAVING been received into the congregation of Christ's flock, and having made Christ's Church our home, we must walk as "strangers and pilgrims" here on earth. This is what the Church on this day would teach us to do. Such is indeed her object in all the services of this sacred season, in which she is gently leading us on from earth to heaven; but this being the Sunday on which the early Christians were accustomed yearly to commemorate their baptism, it is on this day especially that we call to mind the solemn vow, promise, and profession, which we have also made, and the manner in which we have kept them. The state of Christians here on earth answers to that of the Israelites in the wilderness. They were strangers and sojourners as all their fathers were, journeying onward towards that good land whither God would bring them,—so have we here no continuing city, but we seek one to come. (Hebrews, xiii. 14.) As "strangers* and pilgrims" we "have our conversation in heaven,"

* Epistle, verse 11.

"looking for, and hastening unto the coming of the day of God."

We can, therefore, have no better precepts for our guidance than those by which the Israelites were directed in their wanderings, and which are read to us from this time out of the book of Deuteronomy. In this morning's lesson, Moses, the lawgiver of Israel, is reminding the people of their privileges and corresponding duties. God, he says, had made a covenant with them, such as he had not made with any other of the nations upon earth. He had taken them from the midst of Egypt by signs, and by wonders, and by war, and by a mighty hand,* and by a stretched-out arm. None other nation was there so great who had God so nigh unto them in all things that they called upon Him for.† He had guided them by the light of His Presence, and Himself had spoken unto them out of the midst of the fire.‡ Out of the heaven He had made them to hear His voice, that He might instruct them, and teach them in the way wherein they should go. He had provided for them cities of refuge, which those who fell unawares into sin might flee unto and live;‖ and, lastly, He had promised that in the days of tribulation He would be to those who turned to Him, a merciful and gracious God. And for all this He only required of them that they should "take heed lest they forgot the things which their eyes had seen."§ He charged them that they should keep clear of the idolatrous practices of the nations through whose land they would have to pass,¶ walking in all the statutes

* Morn. Less. ver. 34.; † ver. 7. ‡ Even. Less. ver. 4.
‖ Morn. Less. ver. 41, &c.; § ver. 9; ¶ ver. 15.

and judgments which He should speak in their ears,—and, with eyes fixed on the promised land, neither turn aside to the right hand nor to the left from the way which led thereto.*

Thus did Moses, the prophet of the Lord, address the people of Israel, and thus does Christ, the Great Prophet, of whom Moses was but the type, (see Deut. xviii. 15,) address baptized Christians through His holy word and Church this day.

The collect reminds us of the solemn profession which in holy baptism we took upon ourselves. We were then admitted into the "fellowship of Christ's religion,"† that is, we were separated from the world around to be brought into the Blessed Assembly and Church of the First Born, which are written in heaven. (Heb. xii. 22, 23.) Like the Israelites of old we were blessed with the light of God's presence; for the Holy Spirit Which was given to us in our baptism guides and illumines our path, just as the pillars of the cloud and of fire guided and enlightened theirs. It is He Who leads us into all truth, and when we are in error brings us back into the way of righteousness.† He comforts us in tribulation, and when we have erred and strayed from the right path, it is He Who brings us to the foot of the cross, as unto the only "sure refuge"‡ of repenting Christians. Thus we are indeed a holy nation, a peculiar people, ordained that we should shew forth the praises of Him Who hath called us out of darkness into His marvellous light. (1 St. Peter, ii. 9. Compare Morn. Less. verse 28.)

* Evening Lesson, verse 32.
† Collect. ‡ See Morn. Less. verse 42, &c.

But as the Israelites were laid under obligations by their privileges, so are we. Like them, we have to pass through the wilderness of this world as "strangers and pilgrims."* As strangers, then, who have here no continuing city, but who seek one to come, we must "set our affections on things above, not on things on the earth," and as pilgrims who turn not aside to the right hand or to the left, until they reach the spot to which their vows have led them; so we, "forgetting those things that are behind, and reaching forth towards those things that are before, must press forward towards the prize of our high calling." Like them also we have enemies to encounter in our Christian course. The corrupt desires and inclinations of our own hearts, which the epistle calls "fleshly lusts," are the enemies from whom we have most to dread.

Of these, some one or other is continually rising up against us, clothed in some tempting form, to turn us out of the right way. Selfishness, pride, and uncharitableness, love of the world, and forgetfulness of God and of holy things, are amongst the beginnings of those "works of the flesh" of which St. Paul says, that they who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. (Gal. v. 19.) These then are the things which we must "eschew"† or "abstain from,"‡ as contrary to our Christian profession; for they are the enemies we bound ourselves to resist, when we promised manfully to fight under Christ's banner against the world, the flesh, and the devil, unto our life's end. (Baptismal Service.)

* Epistle, verse 11. † Collect. ‡ Epistle.

Having thus, in the former part of the epistle, learned to renounce those things that are "contrary to our profession," the latter part of this Scripture teaches us how to live agreeably to the same. By each one striving to do his duty in that particular sphere in which God has placed him,* and in subjection to the powers set over him by God, Christians may be in the world, and be not of it; they may remain in the midst of it, and yet be freed from the evil of it.

Lest, however, we should faint or be discouraged in this arduous struggle, the gospel on this day begins to raise our thoughts to that blessed time when sorrow shall be turned into gladness and heaviness into joy. Yet a little while, says our Lord Himself,† and we shall see Him,— Him Whom we have seen but by faith, as through a glass darkly, we shall after "a little while" see "face to face." If then we do but endure unto the end, we shall at that day bless God that we have been taught to walk through the world only as strangers and pilgrims; we shall find that "the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us," (Rom. viii. 18,) and that "our light affliction, which is but for a moment, has worked for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." (2 Cor. iv. 17.)

* Verses 12–17. † Gospel, verses 17, 22.

Fourth Sunday after Easter.

Epistle, St. James, i. 17.
Gospel, St. John, xvi. 5.
Morning Lesson, Deut. vi.
Evening Lesson, Deut. vii.

As we draw nearer to the festivals of Ascension and Whitsuntide, the Church tells us more clearly of that blessed place to which we are journeying, and of the Holy Spirit Which is to conduct us thither. The collect speaks of it as the place where alone true joys are to be found. In the gospel we behold our Blessed Lord going up* to prepare us a mansion in it, while the whole tone of the services is to show how the Holy Comforter is even now training us for its enjoyment.

This world is our trial; heaven is our rest. We must pass through the waves of this troublesome world before we can arrive at the land of everlasting rest. How to pass through them safely is what we have now to learn, and this is just what the collect for this day would endeavour to teach us.

Nothing will so much enable us to bear up under present trials, as the firm hope of future joys. The Israelites, under their difficulties and discouragements, were directed to look for-

* Gospel, verse 5.

ward to the rest (Deut. xii. 9) and to the inheritance which was laid up for them; and we, who are exposed to the "changes and chances of this mortal life," are taught (as in this collect) to look onwards to that blessed place where alone true joys are to be found. While, therefore, we keep our minds firmly fixed upon this blessed hope, the outward ills of this life will have no power to hurt us. To us all the paths of the Lord will be mercy and truth, and all things will work together for our good. (Psalm xxv. 9.) We shall not be afraid of any evil tidings, for our heart standeth fast and believeth in the Lord, (Psalm cxii. 7,) knowing that "we have in heaven a better and an enduring substance." (Heb. x. 34.) The only enemies to this settled peace of mind are our own unruly wills and affections.* When our tempers are allowed to remain ungoverned, and our wishes uncontrolled,— when we are careful and troubled about many things, instead of heeding only the one thing needful,— then we are in danger through our own fault; we toss about on the waves of this troublesome world, instead of drawing nearer unto the haven where God would have us be.

The only means then by which we may obtain true happiness, is to follow God's commandments rather than our own wishes, to love God's will rather than our own. This was the end of all the injunctions so repeatedly urged upon the newly-redeemed people of Israel, as it is also the end of all those holy precepts which are repeatedly urged upon the newly-redeemed people of Christ now. Even now does our

* Collect.

Divine Redeemer call upon us to fear the Lord our God, and keep all His statutes and His commandments.* Setting before us the hopes of that "good land"† into which He is "bringing us to possess it," He urges us so to love Him above all things here, as that we may obtain His glorious promises hereafter; and, promising us His gracious aid, He tells us not to be afraid of those enemies who would obstruct our progress thither. Lest, however, the "good things" which, even in His kingdom on earth, God thus mercifully promises, should make us careless and secure, these lessons repeatedly warn us to beware, lest in the midst of blessings we forget the Lord our God.‡ We, as the Israelites had, have many enemies to cast out, which are not to be conquered all at once, or without labour. The Cross, signed upon our foreheads at our baptism, is as the "frontlets"‖ of the Israelites, to remind us of this daily warfare. Daily, and by little and little, must we overcome some wrong temper, cast out some unholy thought, or bring into subjection some ungovernable or worldly wish.

The power thus to regulate our unruly wills and affections does not, however, belong to our sinful nature. It cometh from God only, and must be reckoned amongst those good and perfect gifts which are sent down upon us from above.§ How God, in His goodness, bestows it upon us, we learn from the epistle and gospel for this day. When, in holy baptism, He "begat us again,"¶ by His Spirit, unto newness of life, our sinful nature was changed and sancti-

* Morn. Less. verse 2; † verse 18; ‡ verses 10–12;
‖ verse 8. § Epistle, verse 17; ¶ verse 18.

fied. The "word of truth" was then "engrafted"* upon our corrupt hearts, just as one kind of tree is grafted upon another. We know that when a new and better graft is joined to the body of an old tree, the old stock partakes of the nature of the tree which has been newly grafted upon it. Just so is it with us. When we were "grafted into the Body of Christ," the prayer of the Church for us was, that our "old Adam," or sinful nature, might be buried in us, and the new man raised up in us; that all carnal affections might die in us, and all things belonging to the Spirit live and grow in us. (See Baptismal Service.) Thus was "the Word" thoroughly joined to us, and made a part of ourselves,—and thus did God give unto us "that thing which by nature we cannot have." But even in a grafted tree the old wild shoots will sometimes sprout out unless they are continually pruned and cleared; and so, even in our renewed nature, carnal affections, unless continually mortified and kept in check, will be likely to live and grow again; therefore does the apostle desire us to "lay aside all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness," that so we may "receive with meekness the engrafted Word, which is able to save our souls."*

Seeing, then, how this precious gift, once given, might be corrupted and lost, God, in His mercy, vouchsafes to renew it in answer to our prayers. Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour, went up into heaven, in order (as we read in this day's gospel) that He might pour down upon us the continual dew of His blessing. From thence He sends the Blessed Spirit to

* Epistle, verse 21.

be our teacher, our guide, our comforter.* It is this Blessed Spirit Who reproves us of our sins, and Who leads us into righteousness; and by Him it is that the devil, or "prince of this world," the chief of all our spiritual enemies, is brought to judgment and cast out.† He helpeth our infirmities, and, like a tender guide,‡ leads us gently in the paths which suit us best. If, then, we strive to lay aside all carnal and corrupt affections, God, the Father of Lights, will give us His Holy Spirit to draw us after Him. By His aid we shall be enabled to order our unruly wills and affections, until "every thought is brought into obedience unto Christ." He will "put out all our enemies from before us,"‖ and so bring us safely into that good land which God has sworn unto our fathers to give us.§

* Gospel, verse 7; † verses 9, 10, 11; ‡ verse 13.
‖ Morn. Less. verse 19; § verse 18, and Deut. vii. 12.

Fifth Sunday after Easter.

Epistle, St. James, i. 22. *Morning Lesson*, Deut. viii.
Gospel, St. John, xvi. 23. *Evening Lesson*, Deut. ix.

We have now been taught to value the "good things" of Christ's kingdom. We have learned to look forward to them, and place our affections upon them.

It now only remains for us to pray for them, and prepare our hearts to receive them; and that such is the object of the present season, we find by the services which are appointed for it.

This has ever been a season for special supplication in the Church of Christ. Our Blessed Lord is now ascending into heaven to "pray the Father for us."* We, who on earth are by faith contemplating our ascending Saviour, choose this time to implore that by His gracious intercession He would procure for us all things necessary for our souls and bodies. For the latter we reserve to-morrow and the two following days. (See Rogation days.) It is for the wants of our souls that we supplicate Him to-day.

The service for last Sunday prepared us for the collect which we use this day. Then we

* Gospel, verse 26.

learnt from Holy Scripture that "every good and perfect gift cometh from above,"—now, addressing ourselves to Him from Whom all good things do come, we ask for the best and highest of His gifts—the Holy Spirit.*

From the words of this prayer we learn something of the way in which the Holy Spirit acts upon our souls.

His office in directing the souls of men is very much what that of a guide is in directing their bodies. A guide shews us the right way, and leads us towards it by the best and safest paths, but he does not force us to walk therein. He leads in safety only those in whom he sees a readiness to follow. Just so it is with our Heavenly Guide. By "His holy inspiration" does God the Holy Ghost put good thoughts into our minds, but He does not force us to act upon them. He points out what good things we ought to do, but upon us it must depend whether we shall so follow His merciful guidance as to be enabled to perform the same.

Seeing, then, that God's "holy inspiration" profits us only in proportion to its fruits, we must follow St. Paul's injunction in the epistle for this day, to be "doers of the word, and not hearers only."† Carefully seeking the guidance of God's Holy Spirit, we are here taught to search into our hearts to know what "manner of men"‡ we are. Having discovered what is amiss in us, we should then yield up our souls to His holy inspiration, and so should we go forward in all those holy tempers which are here laid down as the marks of "true religion."

The Holy Ghost, ruling and directing us,

* Collect. † Epistle, verse 22; ‡ verse 24.

would enable us to exercise restraint over ourselves, and charity to others.* It would keep us "altogether unspotted from the world;" and in the possession of such a frame of mind we should find even here a foretaste of that happiness which is in store for us hereafter.

But for strength to arrive at so holy and happy a state, we must look to no less a power than the intercession of our divine Lord and Saviour. To this holy mystery then it is that the Church at this time directs our thoughts. The case of Moses and the Israelites in the Old Testament shadows forth as in a type this heavenly doctrine. Moses, the teacher and guide of Israel, is about to leave his people; before his departure he addresses them in the solemn and affecting words which we here read, reminding them of all that God had done for them through his means.†

The Almighty had indeed already crowned them with every blessing, temporal and eternal, which a people could desire; but Moses had been the mediator through whom those benefits had been conferred. When they needed anything, it was Moses who asked the Lord for it,—when they had sinned, it was Moses who prayed to the Lord that He would forgive their iniquity, even at the expense of having his own name blotted out from under heaven.‡ (Compare Exodus, xxxii. 32.)

This office of Moses is but a very faint type of the gracious work which our Divine Redeemer even now carries on at the right hand of God.

Before His ascension, Christ, our merciful

* Epistle, verses 26, 27. † Even. Less.; ‡ verse 14.

Intercessor, addressed His disciples in the words recorded in the gospel for this day. He had before inculcated the precepts of love and obedience, as the only paths in which to walk safely through the dangers of this great and howling wilderness. Now that He is about to leave them, He reminds them of all the mercies bestowed on them through His means,—and He comforts them with the assurance, that, when removed from their sight, He will be still more powerfully present with them to help them, and hear their prayers, than when actually present with them in the body.* Thus does the Lord even now look down from heaven upon the children of men. As Man, He compassionates our infirmities,—as God, He is able to give us all we pray for. He bids us "ask in His name and we shall receive;"† He will "give us whatsoever we ask, that our joy may be full." He knows all the struggles to which we are subject while passing through the wilderness of this world, but He bids us "be of good cheer, for that He has overcome the world."‡ He gives us assistance in difficulties, comfort in trials; He provides us with such things as are needful for our bodies as well as our souls, and blesses us with such peace as the world cannot give. Such are some of the "good things"‖ with which God even now refreshes His people, who pray to Him on earth. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive, the good things which He hath prepared for them in His kingdom in heaven." (1 Cor. ii. 9.)

* Gospel, verse 23, &c.; † verses 23, 24; ‡ verse 33.
‖ Collect.

The Rogation Days.

THE meaning of the word *Rogation* is the same as that of litany, namely, prayer or supplication; and the Rogation days (which are the Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday before the festival of our Lord's ascension) are therefore so called, because they are set apart by the Church for earnest prayer and supplication.

From many examples in Scripture, we find it has ever been the custom that, at certain solemn seasons, prayer and intercession should be offered up to Almighty God, to implore that He would turn away from His people those temporal punishments which their sins had deserved, and bestow upon them, with other national blessings, the comforts of plenty and of peace. (Deut. xxvi.; Neh. ix. 6.) The Church, following in this, as in all other things, the teaching of Holy Scripture, ordered as early as the fifth century, that these days should be so observed; and most fitly has she selected this particular season for the purpose, — for as it is only by the intercession which our Redeemer, since His ascension, has been carrying on at the right hand of God, that our prayers are ever heard, how can we better prepare ourselves to celebrate with due thankfulness the coming festival, than by claiming for ourselves those benefits which His ascension

and consequent mediation have procured; and thus realising more fully how expedient it was for us that He "should go away?" (St. John, xvi. 7.) This, it seems, is what the Church would teach us by choosing as the gospel for Rogation Sunday, that part of our Lord's last discourse, when, in connection with His "leaving the world and going to His Father,"* He says, "*At that day* ye shall ask in My Name;"† and again, "Hitherto have ye asked nothing in My Name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full."‡

This being the season when we have especial need of God's blessing upon the fruits of the earth which are springing up, it was ordered at the Reformation, that the minister and principal persons of each parish should walk in procession round its bounds, and there, while beholding God's benefits, the people were exhorted by their minister to bless God for them, and to pray for their continuance. After repeating the 104th Psalm, they were accustomed to join in prayer in the parish church. Though this is one amongst those old customs, of which the outward observance has unfortunately fallen into disuse, yet every Churchman, who sees the Rogation days marked out by the Church as one of her yearly fasts, will not be acting the part of one of her true sons, if he fail to keep them by special and earnest supplications and intercessions. There are numberless examples in Scripture to prove that "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much," (St. James, vi. 16,) and that whole nations have by its means been saved from destruction. We

* St. John, xvi. 28; † verse 26; ‡ verse 24.

have only to turn to the first lesson for last Sunday evening, to see that the name of God's chosen people was on the point of being blotted out from under heaven, had not Moses fallen down before the Lord in fasting and prayer for forty days and forty nights.* The prayers of Abraham prevailed so far with God, that the Almighty promised that if "ten righteous" could he found in the devoted cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, they should be spared; (Gen. xviii.) and Lot, by his intercession, saved the city of Zoar. (Gen. xix.) The Ninevites, by their prayers and fastings, turned God's wrath away from their city; and Esther (Esther, iv. 15, 16) and her maidens saved the Jews from the destruction impending over them. We know not then from what future calamities our country might be rescued, if such solemn times and ordinances as these were better observed; for though man planteth and watereth, it is God alone Who giveth the increase, and we know not how soon He may be pleased to withdraw those seasons of plenty with which He has hitherto blessed us,† if we are so negligent of the means of procuring their continuance.

To us, then, may be applied the warning addressed to the Israelites in the lesson for last Sunday: "When thou hast eaten and art full, then thou shalt bless the Lord thy God for the good land which He hath given thee. Beware that thou forget not the Lord thy God, in not keeping His commandments, and His judgments, and His statutes, which I command thee this day; lest when thou hast eaten and art full, and hast built goodly houses, and dwelt therein;

* Deut. ix. 25, &c. † Written in the year 1844.

and when thy herds and thy flocks multiply, and thy silver and thy gold is multiplied, and all that thou hast is multiplied; then thine heart be lifted up,"—*then beware lest "thou forget the Lord thy God."**

Let us, then, who have been too forgetful of Him, "from Whom," as the collect teaches us, "all good things do come," and by Whom alone they can be continued, turn to Almighty God, at this time especially, in weeping, fasting, and prayer,—and if, through the mediation of Moses, the prayers of God's people of old were heard, what may we not hope, as a Church and a nation, when we offer up our supplications in the name of that All-powerful Mediator, Who even as at this time went up into heaven, "there to appear in the Presence of God for us."

* Deut. viii. 10–15.

Ascension Day.

For the Epistle, Acts, i. 1. *Morning Lessons*, Deut. x. St. Luke, xxiv. 44.
Gospel, St. Mark, xvi. 14. *Evening Lessons*, 2 Kings, ii. Eph. iv. 1–17.

Psalms, viii., xv., xxi., xxiv., xlvii., cviii.

HAVING now followed our Divine Redeemer through the course of His holy life, painful death, and glorious resurrection, we celebrate to-day His triumphant ascension into heaven at the right hand of God. Thus each of these festivals of the Church is intended — first, to confirm our faith in the several articles of our creed, and secondly, to teach us the right practical use of each of these articles; therefore, by observing each festival in order, and learning the practical lesson it brings with it, we shall find that the right use of each will successively prepare us for the next; and so, going on step by step as the Church directs, our creed, instead of being an empty form of words, will lead us to that right faith on which depends our salvation, and then to holiness, which is the fruit of faith. At Easter, we were taught to rise with Christ unto newness of life, in order that we might be made partakers of the benefits

of His resurrection. The Sundays which intervened between the festival of Easter and that of the Ascension, by instructing us that this "newness of life" consists in walking through this world only as a passage to heaven, naturally led us to fix our affections on heaven and heavenly things, and thus gradually prepared us to celebrate the ascension of our Lord, according to the spirit of this day's collect. We are here taught that to do this rightly, it is not enough to believe that our Lord Jesus Christ has ascended into the heavens; we must also "in heart and mind thither ascend, and with Him continually dwell;"* that is, our hearts must ascend after Him here in true devotion; we must be diligent in using those means of grace by which He dwells in us and we in Him; and lastly, as our hearts will unavoidably be where our treasure is, we must, if we wish to dwell with Him continually, place our hopes and affections not on earth, but on heaven and heavenly things.

This, then, is the spirit in which we are to enter upon the services for this holyday. Let us now consider what part the ascension of our Lord has in the mysterious scheme of redemption, that, knowing the benefits we derive from it, we may celebrate this festival not only with heavenly mindedness, but with that gratitude and joy which the recurrence of it should ever call forth.

All the sacrifices and ceremonies of the Levitical law being intended as types or representations of the mysteries of our redemption, which the gospel unfolds to us, the best way of

* Collect.

meditating on those mysteries is to refer to the types under which the law represented them. The sacrifice of our Lord on the cross was represented under the law when the high priest offered a sin offering for the sins of the people, (see Lev. xvi. 16 ;) but as in order to complete the atonement which the sin-offering had begun, the high priest entered into the holy of holies with the blood of the sacrifice, (Heb. ix. 7 ; Lev. xvi. 2 ;) so the Messiah, having offered up Himself for the sin-offering, entered into the highest heavens to present His blood as the justification for our sins. This is what St. Paul teaches us in his epistle to the Hebrews, where he says, "Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us," (Heb. ix. 24 ;) and again, "He is able also to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them." (Heb. vii. 25.) Christ's intercession, then, is the benefit for which we thank God on this holy festival. No wonder, then, that the Church should celebrate with holy joy the day when our Saviour not only completed our redemption, but began that intercession through which He applies the benefits of it to all who come to Him.

The Church has, therefore, appointed such proper psalms and lessons, as shall lead us to make so practical a use of that joy, that, dwelling with Him in heart and mind here, we may be fit to enjoy His glorious presence in heaven. In the psalms we celebrate our Lord's ascension by singing joyful praises to Him Who is "gone

up with the sound of a trump,"* and we desire to "wake early,"† that we may sing and give praise to Him Who has set Himself above the heavens, and Whose glory is over all the earth."‡ In order, however, to enter into those joyful strains, we must still follow the teaching of the Church in her selection of proper psalms, and first ascertain whether we are likely to be of the number of those who will ascend after Him in joy and glory. "Who then," let us ask with the psalmist, "shall ascend into the hill of the Lord, or who shall rise up in His holy place?"‖ "Who shall dwell in His tabernacle, or who shall rest upon His holy hill?"§ "He that leadeth an uncorrupt life, and doeth the thing that is right, and speaketh the truth from his heart."¶ "He that hath clean hands and a pure heart: and hath not lift up his mind unto vanity, nor sworn to deceive his neighbour."** "This is the generation of them that seek Him: even of them that seek thy face, O Jacob!"†† Of "this generation" then must we be, if we would join in the rejoicings of the Church militant on earth, or hope to be admitted to those of the Church triumphant in heaven.

The ascension of Moses into the mount,‡‡ and of Elijah into heaven,‖‖ are selected as the subjects for the proper lessons, because they are considered as types of the ascension of our Lord. As Moses went into the mount to receive the law and deliver it to the Jews, so our

* Psalm xlvii. 5. † Psalm cviii. 2; ‡ verse 2.
‖ Psalm xxiv. 3. § Psalm xv. 1; ¶ verse 2.
** Psalm xxiv. 4; †† verse 6.
‡‡ 1st Morning Lesson. ‖‖ 1st Evening Lesson.

Lord ascended into heaven that He might (as we read in the second lesson for the evening) send down the gift of His Holy Spirit upon apostles, evangelists, pastors, and teachers, and through them to us * In like manner we learn that, as after the ascent of Elijah, a double portion of his spirit rested on Elisha his follower ;† so, after the ascension of our Lord, His disciples received the gifts of the Holy Spirit, through Whose assistance we also hope to be exalted to that same place whither He has gone before.

Having thus contemplated the ascension of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ by types in the Old Testament, we shall be fully prepared to enter into the narrative of it, which we read in the second lesson for the morning, as well as in the gospel for the day. The scripture selected for the epistle not only confirms all the circumstances before related in the lesson, but, by recording the words addressed by the angels to the apostles, also affords us a lesson with which we may do well to conclude our meditations upon this day. Let us not then, on this day, content ourselves with idly "gazing up"‡ after our Lord into heaven, but diligently prepare for His return. Let us strive, even now, "in heart and mind thither to ascend." Let us show, by practising those virtues to which the psalms of this day exhort us, that we are of the "generation of those who seek Him,"‖ and consequently of those who hope to ascend into His holy hill ; and let us follow, and profit by the gracious gifts of that "Comforter" Who is

* 2nd Even. Less. verse 11. † 1st Even. Less. verse 9.
‡ Epistle, verse 11. ‖ Psalm xxiv. 6.

promised as the consequence of His ascension. Thus, and thus only, shall we so truly dwell with Him here, that when "He shall so come in like manner as He went up into heaven,"* we may hope to be of the number of those who look for Him, and to whom He shall appear the second time without sin unto salvation. (Heb. ix. 28.)

* Epistle, verse 11.

Sunday after Ascension Day.

Epistle, 1 St. Peter, iv. 7.
Gospel, St. John, xv. 26, and part of chap. xvi.

Morning Lesson, Deut. xii.
Evening Lesson, Deut. xiii.

This week is called expectation-week, in remembrance of the state in which the apostles remained from the time of our Lord's ascension until the descent of the Holy Spirit; and is to be employed by us as it was by them, in praying for the gifts of the Blessed Comforter, and preparing for His reception. The services are intended to lead us on from the festival of the Ascension to that of Whitsunday, for while they keep up the spirit of the former by still contemplating our Lord's exaltation in heaven, they prepare us for the latter, by looking to the Holy Spirit as the Guide Whom He has left to conduct us to Himself. For this Holy Spirit, then, the collect prays. The epistle teaches us how to use His precious gifts when bestowed;* in the gospel He is promised under the name of "the Comforter,"† and from the lessons we learn how we may obtain an increase of His precious gifts by seeking Him in the Christian tabernacle in which He dwells.‡ The collect

* Verse 10. † Verse 26. ‡ Morn. Less.

opens with mingled feelings of joy and sorrow; we, like the apostles, rejoice at the event which has procured for us a Mediator at the right hand of God, while with them we grieve at the absence of our Lord; the second part of the collect prays for an increase of that Spirit, through Whom we hope to be both guided and comforted here, and exalted to glory hereafter, while the close of the collect, by reminding us that He Who is now our Intercessor is also our God, encourages us to hope that our petitions may not be offered in vain. The epistle carries us back to the lesson inculcated on Ascension-day, by looking forward to the "end of all things,"* when He Whose ascension we have been commemorating, shall "so come in like manner as He went up into heaven." (Acts, i. 11.) It teaches us that to be prepared for His return, we must now cultivate the duties of prayer, watchfulness, sobriety and charity.† Having performed the first part of these by praying in the collect for the gift of the Holy Comforter, let us use watchfulness in diligently improving those precious gifts, so that we may bring forth in us the fruits of sobriety and charity. By sobriety is here meant, exercising such a restraint over ourselves, as to bring our own desires in subjection to our duty; and "charity" includes love to God and man; therefore in these two virtues are comprehended our duty to God, our neighbour and ourselves; and by striving to perform them to the best of our power in the different stations in which God has placed us, shall we be making the best use of the talent committed to our charge, and

* Epistle, verse 7; † verses 7, 8.

preparing for our Lord's return. The lessons for the day carry out the spirit of the Church's teaching during this season. As Moses, who was a type of our Lord, went up into the mount to receive the pattern of the tabernacle, so did our Saviour Jesus Christ ascend into the highest heavens, that He might from thence send down His Holy Spirit to form and model His Church; therefore all the directions contained in the morning lesson with regard to the sanctuary of God, and the priests commissioned to serve it,* though spoken by Moses to the Jews, may also be considered as spoken by Christ our Lord to the members of His "true tabernacle" (Heb. viii. 2) the Church. Thus, as they were commanded to come into the place which "the Lord their God had chosen, to place His Name there,"* and to rejoice before the Lord their God, so are we to come into the Church where He now dwells by His Spirit, and to rejoice before the Lord our God in praise and thanksgiving. As they were to bring their offerings and oblations, and "eat before the Lord their God," so are we Christians now to offer up our "alms and oblations," and eat before the Lord our God the "most comfortable sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ;" and as they are warned in the evening lesson to beware of false prophets, so are we to beware of grieving the Holy Spirit by listening to false teachers, instead of being guided by those who have received the Holy Spirit in His own appointed way.

Lastly, the promise of that Blessed Spirit is given to us in the gospel by our Lord Himself.†

* Morn. Less. verse 5, &c. † Verse 26.

The word "Comforter," under which He is spoken of here also signifies Advocate and Teacher. In these three characters, then, does He still communicate Himself to us: as our Comforter, by administering consolation and support in every circumstance of our life; as our Advocate or Intercessor, by pleading our cause with God and helping us to pray; and as our Teacher, not only by the outward instructions of His Church, but also by the inward pleadings of conscience.

Therefore let us pray, especially at this time, for the guidance of this heavenly Monitor; let us reverence Him by seeking Him in all the ordinances of His Church, and making a good use of the talents which He bestows.

Being thus guided on earth by His counsels, we may hope to be led on like the apostles, from "gazing up after our Lord into heaven," (Acts, i. 11,) to being received by Him in glory. (See Ascension Day.)

Whitsunday.

For the Epistle, Acts, ii. 1. *Morning Lessons*, Deut. xvi. 1–18; Acts, x. 34.
Gospel, St. John, xiv. 15. *Evening Lessons*, Isaiah, xl. Acts, xix. 1–21.

Psalms, xlviii., lxviii., civ., cxlv.

THIS day, on which we commemorate the miraculous descent of the Holy Ghost upon the apostles, is set apart to consider the benefits conveyed to us by the coming of the Holy Spirit, and to praise God for them.

It is the office of the third Person of the Blessed Trinity to perfect the work of our salvation by applying to us the merits of Christ's redemption, and restoring to us that spiritual life which our nature had forfeited at the fall; therefore the day on which He first came to dwell with His Church, must ever be commemorated by her members as one of holy joy and thanksgiving.

The spiritual life of which the Holy Ghost is the Author and Giver, was first bestowed upon us at our baptism, when the stain of our natural corruption was washed away, and we were made new creatures in righteousness and true holiness. As outward and visible objects

are often used as helps in realizing things inward and spiritual, the early Church ordered that newly baptized persons should at this season appear in church in white garments, to represent that holiness and purity which are the especial fruits of the Spirit, and which the sacrament of baptism had just conveyed to them. Though this custom no longer prevails, yet the name of Whitsunday (or *Sunday in whites*, which this festival still bears in remembrance of it) may serve to remind all baptized Christians of that garment of holiness and purity with which the Holy Spirit has also clothed their souls, and which it should be their constant endeavour to keep pure and clean.

Being unable to do this in our own strength, our prayer in the collect is, that He Who once cleansed our souls will continue to enlighten and comfort them. The Church, still teaching us by outward signs, or emblems, here represents the Holy Spirit under the emblem of Light, to teach us that He is to our souls, what light is to our bodily senses. As we could not perform our daily tasks without the light of day, so neither can we work out our salvation without the assistance of God's Holy Spirit; and as light guides and cheers those who walk in its beams, while it is of no use to those who wilfully shut their eyes against it; so the Holy Spirit is the Guide and Comforter of all who seek His influence and follow it, while He withdraws Himself from such as wilfully harden their hearts against Him. Thus Solomon says, "The light of the righteous rejoiceth, but the lamp of the wicked shall be put out," (Prov. xiii. 9;) and again, "The path of the

just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day," (Prov. iv. 18;) therefore have we great need to pray, that this heavenly light may give us such a right judgment in all things, that, knowing our duty, and having strength to walk in it, we may evermore go on our way rejoicing in His holy comfort.* As visible objects are thus sometimes used as emblems or representations of spiritual things, so the institutions of the law of Moses are also used as types or foreshadowings of the higher truths of the gospel. Thus, the institution of the Jewish feast of Pentecost is chosen as the subject for this morning's lesson, because it is a type of the Christian festival of Whitsunday. On the feast of Pentecost, which was observed fifty days after the Passover,† the Jews commemorated the giving of the law in the midst of terrors on Mount Sinai; and also gave thanks for the in-gathering of the wheat harvest;‡ on the festival of Whitsunday we commemorate the descent of the law of love to which the law of terror has given place, and we also give thanks for the gathering-in of souls into the Christian Church through the labours of the inspired apostles.

The accomplishment of this great event, which had been typified or represented in the first lesson, is recorded in the Scripture for the epistle, where the descent of the Holy Spirit, together with the circumstances under which He manifested Himself, are distinctly related. From them we may learn something of the nature of the Holy Spirit's dealings, both with the apostles then, as well as with mankind in

* See Collect. † 1st Morn. Less. verse 9; ‡ verse 13.

general. By descending upon them while they were assembled to keep the feast of Pentecost,* we learn that He communicates Himself more especially to those who humbly and obediently seek Him in His ordinances. "The rushing mighty wind,"† by which He first indicated His presence, was to represent the speedy and unexpected success with which He would crown the apostles' labours, and was also an emblem of the operations of the Holy Ghost, which are unseen, and are perceptible only by their effects. The cloven, or divided tongues,‡ signified the diversity of languages which they were enabled to speak in order to publish the gospel; while the form of fire under which these tongues appeared, well represents the nature of that gospel and Him Who inspired it, administering comfort, or threatening destruction, according as we use or abuse it.

Our Saviour Himself gives us in the gospel the simple rule, whereby we may know if we are of the number of those to whom the Holy Spirit will bring peace and comfort. He there declares that if we are of "the world,"‖ that is, if we have no disposition to know Him or to be governed by Him, we can have no part in the gifts of the Blessed Comforter,—but if we love Him, and show our love by our obedience,§ He will so unite us to Himself by His Blessed Spirit dwelling in us, that being made one with Him and He one with us, we shall enjoy His presence and favour here, and by the same Spirit be raised up with Him hereafter.

The 48th Psalm describes the glories of the

* Epistle, verse 1; † verse 2; ‡ verse 3.
‖ Verse 17; § verses 21, 23.

earthly Jerusalem where God of old manifested His especial Presence; and speaks of the happiness and safety of those whose privilege it was to worship within its sacred walls.* Under these figures are represented the glories of the Christian Church where God now dwells by His Spirit, and the comfort and protection He affords to those whose privilege it is to join in her holy ordinances.

The 68th Psalm was sung by the Israelites, when at the removal of the ark to Mount Zion, they praised God for having delivered them from their enemies, and guided and sustained them in their journey through the wilderness. It is, therefore, appropriately used by us Christians, when, on this day, we thank God for having vanquished our spiritual enemies, and sent the gifts of His Holy Spirit to sustain us in the wilderness of this world. These gifts are, His Word and Sacraments, with which the members of His Church are strengthened and refreshed just as the "weary" Israelites were with the "gracious rain" of manna.†

In the psalms for the evening, we magnify the power of God, Who by His Spirit made, and still continues to sustain, all the creatures that are in the world. The Holy Spirit is the "Author and Giver" of life to our souls, as well as to our bodies, therefore, while on this day we praise the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity, and "speak of all His marvellous works," let us not forget to pray that He will sustain our souls as well as our bodies, and so increase in them more and more His precious gifts, that both may be preserved unto ever-

* Verses 2, 8, 10–13. † Verse 9.

lasting life. The prophecies in the evening lesson describe the work which the Holy Spirit has been carrying on in the kingdom or Church of Christ, ever since His first descent on the day of Pentecost. His bringing in the Gentiles into the Christian Church is represented by the taming of wild and ferocious animals.* The harmony and concord subsisting between these wild animals and others of the most different natures and habits, is an emblem of the peace and unity which should exist amongst all who have been "baptized by one Spirit into one Body," (1 Cor. xii. 13;) and by the highway† in which "the remnant of the people were to pass," is to be understood that safe but narrow way, in which He leads all who have taken upon themselves the Christian profession.

The history of Cornelius and that of the Ephesian converts is a fulfilment of the foregoing prophecy respecting the conversion of the Gentiles. From the circumstances attending these conversions, we learn that the workings of God's Holy Spirit have ever been accompanied by outward sacraments and ordinances. Even Cornelius and his friends, who had been favoured with extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost,‡ were yet commanded to "be baptized with water in the name of the Lord,"‖ in order to be made members of His Church, and full sharers in His grace. This shows us plainly the necessity of baptism.

In the case of the Ephesian converts,§ we have an example of the rite of confirmation following upon the sacrament of baptism; for

* 1st Even. Less. verses 6–10; † verse 16;
‡ see verse 44; ‖ verses 47, 48. § 2nd Even. Less.

we here find St. Paul as chief pastor or bishop, laying his hands on those whom he had already baptised,* to strengthen their baptismal faith, and confirm them in their Christian profession.

We are taught then, by the services of this day, not only to praise God for the descent of His Holy Spirit on the Church in general, but also to thank Him for having appointed sacraments and ordinances whereby He communicates Himself to each one of us her members; and we also learn to follow up the profession we made when His Holy Spirit was bestowed upon us, if we would receive the benefit then promised.

Let us, then, keep alive the grace which the Holy Spirit implanted at our baptism, by praying that He will send us more and more of His heavenly light. Let us "wait on Him continually" in the midst of His temple, the Church,† and let us shew ourselves true members of that Church by our love and obedience to Christ, its Head, and unity and concord with our fellow-members.‡ If we thus "watch and keep" that "white garment" (Rev. xvi. 15) which was given to us in baptism, we may humbly hope to be one day admitted among the great multitude, who, having been washed and made white in the Blood of the Lamb, worship for ever before His throne, clothed with white robes, and with palms in their hands. (Rev. vii. 9.)

* 2nd Even. Less. verse 6.

† See 48th Psalm, verse 8. ‡ See 1st Even. Less.

Monday in Whitsun Week.

For the Epistle, Acts, x. 34. *Morning Lessons*, Gen. xi. 1–10; 1 Cor. xii.

Gospel, St. John, iii. 16. *Evening Lessons*, Numb. xi. 16–30; 1 Cor. xiv. 1–26.

THE commemoration of the high festival of Whitsuntide is not limited to the Sunday, but is extended to the two following days, for which separate services are appointed. This being, as we have seen, one of the seasons for baptising in the ancient Church, this week, like that of Easter, was especially devoted to the benefit of the newly baptised members. Not only were thanks given to Almighty God for their conversion, but such services were selected as would be most fitted for their instruction and improvement; they are, therefore, equally applicable to us, who, though not baptised so recently, have equal cause both to thank God for having sent us "the light of His Holy Spirit,"* and to take heed that we have not received in vain. Thus, while the collect again implores the guidance of that heavenly light, the gospel bids us shew ourselves true children of light by our deeds as well as by our words,† and the second lesson for

* Collect. † Verse 21.

the morning points out how every member of Christ has his proper work assigned him in the Church.* To explain this more clearly, the apostle represents the Church, or Body of Christ, under the emblem of the body of man. This, we know, is made up of different limbs or members, all united under one head, kept alive by one soul, and each fitted for some particular office which it is expected to perform.† As long as each keeps in its proper place, deriving life and energy from the soul, and obeying the wishes of the head, all goes on well, and the body is in a healthy state, but everything is thrown into confusion by the disease or inactivity of a single limb. From this we may understand that every member of the Body of Christ has different duties to perform which are expected of him, just as we expect the eye to see or the feet to walk. Some have higher duties and some lower,—some are called to rule and some to obey,—but every one who has been joined to the Body of Christ and made alive by His Spirit, may, in some way or other, prove himself a useful member of His Church, and shew that the Holy Spirit is dwelling and acting in him. If he neglects his duty, and resists the motions of the Blessed Spirit, he himself becomes a diseased and useless member, and knows not how far he may bring disease and confusion into the whole Body.

In the history of the confusion of tongues‡ we have a striking instance of the discord and confusion brought into the world by the pride and presumption of man. It is especially brought before our notice on this day, that by

* Verses 7–12; † verse 12, &c. ‡ 1st Morn. Less.

contrasting it with the miracle of the fiery tongues, to which it gave rise, we might compare the effects of the pride and sin of man with the fruits of the Holy Spirit;—by the one, mankind were divided, while the effect of the other was to restore peace and unity into the world. As a means of keeping up this blessed peace and unity among mankind, the Holy Spirit confers authority upon particular persons, who are to be obeyed and respected by those over whom they are set. Thus he committed to the seventy elders the task of ruling the people of Israel,* and thus does He still set over us "higher powers," unto whom He commends "every soul to be subject," (Rom. xiii. 1,) and who, we are told, are ordained of God.

If, therefore, we are commanded to observe the rules by which the peace and concord of society are to be preserved, how much more are we bound to observe those which the Holy Spirit Himself has made to preserve unity and good order in His Church. These are laid down in the second lesson for the evening, and though they may not be exactly applicable to the present age of the Church, yet they still serve to teach us that the same Holy Spirit Who then dispensed His Spiritual gifts by means of "apostles, prophets, and evangelists," now does so through the bishops, priests, and deacons, their successors, and commands that all things should be done "decently and in order"† under their authority. Every Christian, therefore, who values the precious gifts of the Spirit, will thankfully submit himself to those who are appointed to dispense them, and pray

* See 1st Even. Less. † 2nd Even. Less. verse 40.

for a blessing on their labours. At this time especially (Ember week) he will thankfully embrace the opportunity afforded him of so doing, by joining his prayers with those of his fellows in behalf of such as are about to be admitted into holy orders. None are too young or unlearned to perform this service for the Church of Christ, or to hope that even their petitions may be of some avail towards "setting forth the glory of God, and forwarding the salvation of all men." (See collect for Ember week.)

Thus does the Church at this season teach us that every member of Christ who has been cleansed by His Blood, and quickened by His Spirit, must "walk worthy of the vocation wherewith he is called," endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. (Eph. iv. 1.)

Tuesday in Whitsun Week.

For the Epistle, Acts, viii. 14. *Morning Lessons*, 1 Sam. xix. 18; 1 Thess. v. 12–24.

Gospel, St. John, x. 1. *Evening Lessons*, Deut. xxx. St. John, iv. 1–14.

THE services for the Tuesday of this week carry out the lessons taught us on the preceding days; leading us first to the means through which we must seek the gifts of the Holy Ghost, and then teaching us what is expected of those who receive them.

In the Scripture for the epistle, the holy sacrament of baptism,* and the sacred rite of confirmation,† are again brought forward as the means of conveying to our souls that heavenly light for which the collect prays. This being one of the Ember weeks, we find that the gospel points out the difference between those who have our Lord's commission for dispensing these holy ordinances, and such as presumptuously take upon themselves the sacred office. The former may be compared to good shepherds, to whom their Master has committed the care of His sheep, with power to admit men into His fold, and means to provide for those who remain in it; the latter are like thieves and

* Verse 16; † verse 17.

robbers,* by whom the sheep are deceived and led astray. Let us, then, who have had the privilege of being "received into the congregation of Christ's flock," (Baptismal Service,) submit ourselves to the pastors whom He has set over it by His apostolic commission, and not follow those who have climbed up some other way. The history of Saul's prophetic gifts, recorded in the first morning lesson,† shows us that the divine office may sometimes be exercised by persons whose lives are not sanctified by divine grace; when this is unfortunately the case, we must equally submit to them, and respect their ministrations, ever bearing in mind that our respect is due to the ministers of Christ's Church, not for their own sake, but for the sake of Him Who works by their means.

While, therefore, we thankfully acknowledge that He can bestow the gifts of His Holy Spirit through unworthy as well as worthy instruments, we should still devoutly employ this season in praying that Christ's ministers "may be replenished with the truth of His doctrine, and endued with innocence of life," (Collect for Ember week,) that so by their lives, as well as by their doctrine, they may set forward His glory and our salvation.

The Church, having led us to seek for the gifts of the Holy Spirit through the appointed means, now teaches us to show forth its effects in our lives. For this purpose she calls upon us, as Moses did upon the chosen people of Israel, to "love the Lord our God, and to walk in His ways."‡ She exhorts us not to "quench"‖

* Gospel, verse 1. † Verse 24.
‡ 1st Even. Less. verse 6. ‖ 2nd Morn. Less. verse 19.

or resist the Holy Spirit, but to keep It alive by constant prayer; and in conclusion she lays down the different marks by which we may know whether we are indeed living under His holy influence. If, then, we have a lively faith in the merits of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who died for us that we might "live through Him;"* if we obediently "hear" those who are sent to us of God;† if we are striving to overcome the world,‡ and to love one another as He hath loved us,‖ we are allowed to hope that God is really dwelling in us by His Spirit, and will preserve our whole spirit, soul, and body, unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.§

* 2nd Even. Less. verse 9; † see verse 6;
‡ verses 4, 5; ‖ ver. 11. § 2nd Morn. Less. ver. 23.

The Ember Days.

THE Ember days, which are the Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday preceding the Sundays on which the clergy are ordained, are set apart by the Church, to implore, by prayer and fasting, the blessing of God upon all those who are on the point of being admitted to the sacred office. The word "ember," which signifies rotation or course, is applied to them, because the Sundays for ordination, and consequently the Ember days which precede them, return in regular rotation with the four seasons of the year.

In order that we may better understand the necessity and duty of observing these fasts, we must consider the great privileges and blessings we receive from a divinely ordained ministry.

It was the will of our Lord Jesus Christ, that the salvation which He came into the world to purchase, should, after His ascension, be communicated to mankind, by means of outward and visible ordinances. These outward and visible ordinances, which we call sacraments, He has promised to accompany with His

blessing to all worthy receivers, provided they are administered in the manner He has commanded, and by the persons whom He has appointed. That such persons might never be wanting so long as the world continued, He selected a body of men whom He named apostles, to whom He not only gave authority to preach the gospel, and administer the sacraments, but also to hand on to others the power they had received from Himself. Those to whom the apostles handed on this power transferred their authority to others also, who in the same way again ordained others, and so the commission has come down to our present bishops, who have thus obtained their authority from our Blessed Saviour Himself. That they had this power of transferring to others the authority they themselves had received, we know from the words, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world," (St. Matthew, xxviii. 20,) which our Lord added to His apostolic commission; for as the persons to whom He addressed this promise all died after the lapse of some years, we see very clearly that it applied not to them only, but to their successors in the same office, and consequently to all who can prove that they have received their commission in regular succession from apostolic times. This being proved by the bishops of the English Church, we are quite sure that they, with the priests and deacons, whom they ordain to serve under them, are really the persons appointed by our Lord to preach the gospel and administer the sacraments, and that when we receive them at their hands, our Lord will make good His promise, by accompanying the outward sign with that

inward and spiritual grace which it is intended to represent and convey.

Thus it is, through the means of a divinely ordained ministry, that we are made the children of God in holy baptism, that our souls are strengthened and refreshed by the holy communion, and that we have a body of men to guide and instruct us, whose teaching the Holy Spirit will ever be at hand to bless. Such being, then, the great benefits we receive from the apostolic ministry, let us devoutly observe these seasons, by praying for its continuance amongst ourselves, as well as for its extension to others. By thus keeping the Ember days, each individual Christian may be the humble instrument of advancing Christ's Church upon earth, and will, therefore, be obeying the command of Him Who has taught us daily to pray "Thy kingdom come."

To help us in our devotions at these seasons, the Church has provided two collects, one of which is to be used every day during the Ember week. In the first of these we pray for the Church in general, for the bishops by whom it is governed, and for those whom the bishops shall select to serve in it; but, as if to remind us that the Church and her ministers are only the instruments by which our salvation is applied, and not the cause of it, the opening of the prayer teaches us that the Church, and consequently the salvation and blessings which she conveys, have been purchased for us entirely by the Blood of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The expression "to lay hands suddenly on no man" refers to the manner of ordination, which, according to the example of

the apostles, (Acts, vi. 6; 1 Tim. iv. 14; 1 Tim. v. 22,) is still performed by the laying on of the hands of the bishop. The second collect is entirely devoted to praying for the ministers about to be ordained; and includes the three orders of bishops, priests, and deacons, of which the clergy has always been composed ever since the times of the apostles. By the conclusion of both prayers we learn the end and object both of our petitions and their ministrations, namely, the glory of God, the benefit of His Church, and the salvation of mankind.

Besides these two prayers, the Church gives us additional matter for our devotion and meditation during the Ember weeks, by providing that some part of the service for the Sundays which usually precede or follow them, should bear on the subject: thus, on the third Sunday in Advent, we pray for the "ministers and stewards of God's mysteries;" the epistle for the first Sunday in Lent, by setting before us the trials and labours of the apostle St. Paul, should stir us up to greater earnestness in interceding for those who now hold his office and consequently partake its labours;* while the retirement of our Lord into the wilderness, previous to entering on His ministry (related in the gospel for the same day) sets us an example of fasting and prayer. The miraculous descent of the Holy Ghost upon the apostles, which we commemorate at Whitsuntide, is an encouragement that the same Holy Spirit will now send down upon their successors the "continual dew of His blessing." On the fifteenth and sixteenth Sundays after Trinity, which usually fall about

* Verse 4, &c.

the period of the autumnal Ember week, the collects are likewise devoted to praying for the Church.

Having now seen the duty and privilege of observing the Ember seasons, and considered the prayers and portions of Scripture selected to help us in our observance of them, let us examine what Scripture warrant the Church has for commanding that the ordination of her ministers should be preceded by fasting and prayer. First, we have the precept and example of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who, previously to the appointment of His twelve apostles, not only desired His followers to pray that the Lord of the harvest would send forth labourers into His harvest," (St. Matthew, ix. 38,) but Himself "continued all night in prayer to God." (Luke, vi. 12.) The eleven apostles had recourse to prayer before the election of St. Matthias; (Acts, i. 24;) at the ordination of the seven deacons, the apostles are said to have "prayed" before they laid their hands on them; (Acts, viii. 3;) and Barnabas and Saul were not "sent away" to their work, till the apostles had first "fasted and prayed" and laid their hands on them. What success attended these prayers we know by the subsequent account of the conversions effected by these first preachers of the gospel; and though, in later ages of the Church, the same manifestations of divine power have not followed her petitions, yet every sincere member of Christ's Church who devoutly observes these seasons, may find in such examples an encouragement to hope that He Who then poured down miraculous gifts upon His apostles, will now, in answer to our prayers, "make all

bishops and pastors diligently to preach His holy word, and the people obediently to follow the same, so that they may at length receive the crown of everlasting glory." (Collect for St. Peter's day.)

Trinity Sunday.

For the Epistle, Rev iv. 1. *Morning Lessons*, Genesis, i. St. Matthew, iii.
Gospel, St. John, iii. 1. *Evening Lessons*, Gen. xviii. 1 St. John, v.

On the preceding great festivals we have celebrated the praises of each of the Three distinct Persons of the Blessed Godhead. We have adored the goodness of God the Son in being made Man, dying and rising again for us; that of God the Holy Ghost in sanctifying us; and that of God the Father in both sending the Son and pouring down the Holy Spirit. This day the Church calls upon us to worship these Three Persons as one God, and thus concludes her round of festivals by setting before us the great doctrine of the Trinity in Unity—Three in One.

That we must worship Three Persons, and yet acknowledge but one God, is a mystery which we cannot understand; we must not even try to understand beyond what God has revealed concerning it; but we must firmly believe it, and endeavour to strengthen our faith by prayer, and the study of God's Holy Word. This is what the Church directs us to do this day; for,

after having prayed in the collect that God would "keep us steadfast in this faith," she selects for our meditation the several portions of Holy Scripture, both out of the Old and New Testaments, where this doctrine is clearly taught.

The first chapter in the Bible,* read as one of the lessons for the morning, is one of those from which we learn the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. Holy Scripture here represents one Lord God Almighty as creating heaven and earth;† yet, He Whom we believe to be One only God, speaks in the plural number, saying, "Let *Us*‡ make man in Our own image," and carries on the work of creation by means of Three distinct Persons, viz: He Who spake the word; the Word, by Whom all things were made; and the Spirit Which moved upon the face of the waters.‖ Again, the appearance of the Almighty to Abraham, recorded in the evening lesson, is a lively representation of the Holy Trinity, for here, Three Divine Persons were distinctly seen by Abraham,§ yet we find Abraham addressing himself to One Lord.¶

Thus is the doctrine of the Trinity in Unity clearly taught even in the Old Testament, but it is still more fully revealed in the New, especially in those passages which the Church brings forward this day.

The first of these is the Baptism of our Blessed Lord,** where the Three Persons of the Holy Trinity are brought distinctly before our view. The Son is baptized,†† the Holy Ghost

* 1st Morn. Less.; † verse 1; ‡ verse 26;
‖ verse 2. § 1st Even. Less. verse 2; ¶ verse 3.
** 2nd Morn. Less.; †† verse 16.

descends upon Him,* and the Father's voice is heard from heaven.† No less clearly does our Saviour's conversation with Nicodemus in the gospel bear testimony to the truth we are this day considering; for here also the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are distinctly mentioned. God the Father is said to be present with God the Son in performing those miracles which proved His divine authority.‡ God the Son was conversing with Nicodemus on earth at the same moment that He declares Himself to be in heaven, and God‖ the Holy Ghost is mentioned as the Divine Spirit, from Whom the waters of baptism derive their efficacy.§

But, while we thus acknowledge Three Persons in the Holy Trinity, the second lesson for the evening carries us back to the belief that "these Three are One;"¶ worshipped in heaven as One God, and uniting on earth in the work of our salvation; the means used for accomplishing this great work being (as is said in the 8th verse) the Water, the Spirit, and the Blood; for, by the water of baptism, we are made regenerate; the Blood of Christ, shed on the cross and conveyed to us in the holy communion, cleanses us from our sins; while the new birth given to us in the one, and the pardon sealed to us in the other, are entirely the work of the Holy Spirit.

Having now been taught from the Word of God the important truth that "the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God, and yet they are not Three Gods, but One God," (see Athanasian Creed,) the Scripture

* 2nd Morn. Less. verse 16; † verse 17; ‡ verse 2; ‖ verse 3; § verse 5; ¶ verse 7.

for the epistle shows us how the angels in heaven receive this glorious truth, and thus invites us to copy their example.* Instead, then, of trying to understand what God has not thought fit to explain, let us like them humbly fall down and worship, acknowledging that He Who is three times "Holy"† is but One Lord. Let us try to do His holy Will on earth as they do it in heaven, and we shall, according to our Saviour's promise, "know of the doctrine," (St. John, vii. 17,) for amidst all our trials and infirmities we shall readily find comfort in recollecting that the Almighty is our Father, our Redeemer, and our Sanctifier, as well as our God.

* Epistle, verses 8–11; † verse 8.

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